



M. Vander Gucht Scul.

BENIAMINUS CALAMY
S.T.P.



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SERMONS

Preached upon
Several Occasions.

B Y

BENJAMIN CALAMY, D. D.
Late Vicar of *St. Lawrence Jewry*, and
one of His Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

The Third Edition corrected.

To which is added

A SERMON preached at his Funeral by
WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D. D.
Dean of *St. Paul's*, Master of the Temple, and Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty.

L O N D O N,

Printed by *John Darby*, and sold by the
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Several Occasions.

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...one of His Majesty's Chaplains in Ordinary, and Vicar of St. Lawrence, Jewry, and

THE CHINESE EDITION

Spring 94

WILLIAM WHERLOCK, D.D.,
Dean of St. Paul's, Master of the Temple, and Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty.

1900

Printed by John Day, and sold by the
Bookbinder, 1792.

The Epistle
To his Worthy Friends
The INHABITANTS
Of the
PARISHES

OF
St. Lawrence Jewry,
AND
St. Mary Magd. Milk-street.

Gentlemen,

I Here present you with some Sermons of my dear Brother deceased, your late (if I may be allowed

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lowed

The Epistle

lowed to say it) worthy and faithful Pastor; in transcribing them for the Press I have not presum'd to make any alteration, or to correct so much as the plain Errata's of the original Copy, except only some few, and those such as any Reader almost would have observed, and may well be supposed to have been occasioned only thro his haste in Writing; and if after all there happen to be any such still remaining in the Print, I hope you will blame neither him nor me, since I pretend not to publish any Discourses designed or fitted by him for the Press, but only those very Sermons which you your selves have heard, just as I found them in his Notes.

If it be asked why these rather than others? I answer, These were the Sermons which I found had been

Dedictory.

been preached by him in the most publick Places; to which however because they would not alone have made a just Volume, I thought it necessary to add two or three more; and I doubt not but you will find them all plain and useful, and every way fitted to do good. And if it be asked why no more? I think it will be time enough to answer that Question, when I shall have seen what acceptance these now published meet with in the World.

It was some time before I could persuade my self to comply with your desire in publishing these Sermons, because I have sometimes heard my Brother express an unwillingness that any thing of his should be printed after his Death; but when I had once resolved to print them,

The Epistle

them, it took me no time to consider, it was not left to my choice to whom I should present them, seeing you had an undoubted Title to them: and all the World would have blamed me, if I had not taken this occasion of acknowledging with all thankfulness your extraordinary respect to his Person whilst alive, and to his Memory after his Decease; one particular Instance of which I must by no means omit, I mean your generous Present to his Widow; a kindness which as I am confident he never expected, even from you, from whom he might have expected any thing that was kind; so I dare say if he could have foreseen it, would have pleased him more than any, nay, than all the other kindnesses he ever received from you.

In

Dedicatory.

In the Words therefore of Naomi
concerning Boaz, Blessed be ye of
the Lord, who have not left off your
kindness to the Living and to the Dead:

I am,

Gentlemen,

Your most obliged Servant,

James Colamy.

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fed*

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(1)

A
SERMON

Preach'd at

WHITE-HALL.

The First Sermon.
1

ACTS X. 38.

---Who went about doing good---

WHICH words give us a short account of our blessed Saviour's Life here on earth; it was spent in *doing good*. They also teach us after what manner we his Disciples ought to live in this world; namely, that we should omit no fair opportunity of *doing good* accord-
B ing

ing to our several Abilities and Capacities. I shall speak to them,

I. As referring to our Lord and Saviour, and describing his manner of Life to us.

II. I shall consider them as prescribing to us our Duty in imitation of his most glorious Example, *who went about doing good.*

I. As referring to our Lord and Saviour, and describing his manner of Life to us. Now these words, *he went about doing good*, especially signify these three things:

1. That this was the chief Business and Employment of his Life, to *do good*.

2. That where he did not readily *find*, he went about to *seek*, Objects of Pity and Compassion.

3. This he constantly persevered in, notwithstanding the foul Ingratitude and malicious Opposition his good Works met with in the World.

I. This was the chief Business and Employment of his Life, to *do good*. To propound to you the several instances of it, were to give you an History and Account of his whole Life, the four Gospels being
nothing

nothing else but the authentick Records of those good works *Jesus* of *Nazareth* did ; containing his excellent Instructions, his free Reproofs, the wise Methods he used for the bettering and reforming mens Minds, together with those various kindnesses he shewed to their Bodies and outward Estates , with a Generosity and Charity not to be parallel'd by any thing but the Divine Goodness it self. I shall not therefore descend to particulars, but only take notice. 1. That *doing good* was his ordinary daily Employment. 2. That to the same end tended all his extraordinary miraculous Works : and, 3. That this was also the Sum and Substance of his Religion. From all which it will easily appear, that he made *doing good* the chief Business of his whole Life.

(1.) *Doing good* was his ordinary daily Employment. He did not only by the by, and on great occasions exercise his Charity and Compassion, but it was as it were his only Profession, his Meat and Drink, his Business and Recreation too ; so that he denied himself the Conveniences of this Life, that he might attend this work. How was he throng'd after, and press'd upon by the miserable and unfortunate, the diseased and possessed in all places where-

ever he came; and can you tell of any one person whom he ever sent from his presence dissatisfied? It was but saying *Lord have mercy upon me*, and the poor humble Beggar's wants, of what kind soever, were strait supplied.

And by these acts of Love and Kindness he did engage men to hearken to his wise Counsels, and obey his gracious Commands, for he had a farther design in all this compassion which he shewed towards mens Bodies and outward Estates, *viz.* to heal their Bodies and their Minds both together; to instil and insinuate good Instruction, and to promote mens *eternal* Welfare, by contributing so much to their Ease and Happiness in this *present* life.

All this good he did with the greatest Readiness and Joy; it was his greatest pleasure to spread his healing Wings over every place, continually to dispense his benign Influences and Favours, and to make every one, who had the happiness to converse with him, sensible of his Good-will to Mankind. Nor from this would he ever rest, not so much as on the *Sabbath-day*, tho he was accounted a Transgressor for it. He consulted the good of other men above his own Reputation, and would cure the sick on that day even before

fore those who thought it a great piece of profaneness and wickedness so to do. He wanted Objects sooner than Will to shew kindness ; and nothing grieved him so much as that men by their own Malice and Perverseness should obstruct and defeat his gracious designs towards them, and obstinately refuse to be made happy by him.

(2.) This was not only his ordinary daily Employment, but for this end did he always exercise his extraordinary Divine Power, to do benefits. All his Miracles were Mercies to men, so that his wonderful works proved him to be sent from God , not more by that infinite Power that was seen in them, than by that surpassing Goodness they demonstrated to the World.

He never employed his Omnipotence out of Levity or Ostentation, but only as the Necessities and Wants of men required it. His miraculous Works were not such as the *Jews* sometimes demanded and expected from him, such only as would strike their Senses and Fancy with admiration and astonishment, as the making prodigious and amazing shews and representations in the Heavens, or in the Air ; but they were all expressions of a most

immense Benignity and Charity to Mankind, such as healing the sick of all manner of diseases, making the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, cleansing the Lepers, feeding the hungry, raising the dead, and casting evil Spirits out of those that were miserably possessed with them, and cruelly tormented by them.

In such Good Offices, so useful and profitable to men, did he all along exert and manifest that divine Power which God had anointed him with; thus demonstrating himself to be the most Divine Person that ever appeared in our flesh, not only by doing the *strangest* and *most miraculous works*, but especially by doing the *most good* in the World.

(3.) To *do good* was the Sum and Substance of his Religion. He affected not any precise Singularities, or unusual Severities of life. Of all the time he was here on earth, he spent but forty days in the Wilderness in close solitude and retirement; the rest of his time he conversed freely and openly, that thereby he might have opportunity of obliging and benefiting all sorts of Men. He neglected not indeed any duty of Piety towards God, but then his *love to God* shone forth most resplen-

resplendently in his incessant *Care of*, and *Charity to his Creatures*. He knew he could not please or glorifie his Father better, than by bearing much fruit, or, which is all one, *doing much good* in the World.

His Religion was active and operative: it consisted not in Notions or Formalities, or external Abstinences and Strictnesses; by which the several Sects among the *Jews* were distinguished one from another: But the principal thing he was most remarkable for, in his way of living, was a most sincere *readiness to do all manner of good* to all that came to him. He pretended not to any Seraphick Enthusiastical Raptures, or inimitable unaccountable transports of Devotion, or wonderful Mortification. Others might pray oftner and longer, fast more than He or his Disciples did, (as we know was objected against him by St. *John's* Disciples;) but no Saint, no Prophet, no Man ever before him so served God in his generation; or was either able or willing to shew such considerable kindnesses to the World as our blessed Lord and Saviour did.

And in this chiefly did his Holiness and Godliness appear above the rate and pitch

of other mens, in that he was so infinitely merciful and charitable. He made not such a pompous outward Shew of Religion as some of the *Pharisees* did, but his Actions truly bespoke him what he was, a person infinitely full of Goodness, that could not be at ease without continual venting it self; nor yet by all the Wants, Infirmities, Necessities, either of mens Minds or Bodies, could ever be exhausted.

Thus he made *doing good* the chief business and employment of his whole life, which is the first thing signified by these words.

2. That *he went about doing good* implies farther, that where he did not easily *meet with*, he industriously *sought out* Subjects of Pity and Compassion. His Goodness did often *prevent* mens Desires, always surpass them; doing for them beyond all their requests or hopes. *He came to seek and save that which was lost.*

He descended from the bosom of his Father, and eclipsed the glory of his Divine Majesty with a veil of flesh, and lived amongst us, that he might redeem us from the greatest Evils and Miseries, even while we were enemies to him, and *desired* no more than we *deserved* his Love and

and Favour. And whilst he was here upon earth, he was not only easie of access, he did not only courteously receive all that addressed themselves to him, he not only freely invited and encouraged all men to repair to him for Succour and Relief; but also did not disdain himself to travel up and down the Country on purpose to give opportunity to all that stood in need of him, to partake of his healing virtue and power. Those whom his Disciples checked for their rude and troublesome importunity, he lovingly entertained, and never dismissed without a Blessing.

This mightily enhanced the value of every Kindness be bestowed, the Frankness of his doing it doubled the Benefit. We spoil a good turn when it is extorted from us. It loseth all its grace and acceptableness, when it is done *grudgingly* and *as of necessity*.

Nay, our Saviour denied not to converse familiarly with *Publicans* and the greatest *Sinners*: He endeared himself to them by signal condescensions; tho this also proved matter of Reproach and Infamy to him: as if he countenanced those vices he attempted to cure, or it were any disgrace to a Physician to visit his Patients. He refused not the civil offer of

a Pharisee, tho his sworn Enemy ; and would go to the houses, and eat at the table of those who sought his ruin ; and whatever ill design they might have in inviting him, yet he always improved the occasion for the doing them some considerable good.

3. And Lastly, He constantly persevered in this, notwithstanding the foul Ingratitude and malicious Opposition his good works met with in the World. Never did any one meet with greater discouragements, or more unworthy returns than the Son of God, when all his acts of Beneficence, all the good Offices he had done amongst them were so far from obliging, that they rather tended to exasperate and provoke that untoward generation ; and the more kindness he expressed toward them, the greater haste they made to betray and destroy him. This great Patron and Benefactor, this generous Friend and Lover of Mankind, was mortally hated and cruelly persecuted, as if he had been a publick Enemy, and had done or designed some notorious mischief. They continually laid traps to ensnare him, loaded him with malicious slanders, greedily watched for an advantage to animate the multitude against him, took

took up stones to throw at him, as a reward of his gracious attempt to make them wise and happy ; put bad constructions, and made sinister interpretations of all the good he did, at if he designed to careſs the People, and by ſuch arts to gratifie his ambition, and make himſelf popular. So that this great and gallant perſon was looked upon as a dangerous man, and the more good he did, the more he was feared and ſuſpected : yet all this and a thouſand times worſe uſage could not diſſuade him from perſiſting in *doing good* to them. He was ready to repay all theſe Injuries with Courteſies, even his bittereſt Enemies were partakers of his kindneſs, and he ſtill continued to entreat them to accept of Life from him, and with tears of true compaſſion bewailed their Infidelity and wilful Folly. Nay at laſt, when they laid violent hands upon him, and put him to the ſhameful death of the Croſs, yet then did he pray to his Father to forgive them ; and which is ſtill moſt wonderful, and is the very perfection of Charity, he willingly laid down his Life for them who ſo cruelly and treacherouſly took it from him. Thus our Lord *went about doing good*. Let us who are his Diſciples and Followers

ers go now and do likewise. Which brings me to the second thing I was to consider in these words, *viz.*

II. Our duty in imitation of his most glorious Example, *who went about doing good.*

“ But we, you’ll say, are not in a capacity, we have not Ability or Opportunity of doing good in that ample manner, in that measure and degree our Lord did. We cannot by any means (however willing to it, or diligent in it) come up to the perfection of this noble and heroick Example. Were such miraculous powers communicated to us as were to our Saviour, so that by a word speaking we could heal all manner of sickness, and restore sight to the blind, and feet to the lame; could we instruct the ignorant, reprove the prophane, admonish the erring with so much ease, advantage and authority as our blessed Lord did, we should then perhaps be very free and liberal in imparting those great favours and blessings Heaven had so signally bestowed upon us, for the good and benefit of others: but alas! as things now stand with us, we have neither power nor skill, nor means to
“ do

“ do good at all, after that illustrious
“ manner our Saviour did.

To which all I shall at present reply is,
That tho we cannot after that stupen-
dous manner be beneficial to mankind as
our Saviour was, yet there are very ma-
ny things which we are able to do for
the good of others, which our blessed Sa-
viour could not do by reason of his Pover-
ty and low Estate in this World, without
the expence of a Miracle.

Few of us, but as to our outward cir-
cumstances in this life, are in a far more
plentiful condition than the Son of God
himself was, whilst here on earth : and
it is in our power by ordinary ways to re-
lieve and succour, oblige and benefit ma-
ny, so as our Lord could not do, with-
out employing his Divine Power to furnish
himself with means for it.

Be pleased therefore to take notice that
it is not *doing good* just in the *same in-
stances*, or after that *same wonderful man-
ner*, that this Example obligeth us unto,
but only to a *like willingness* and *readiness*
to *do good* upon all fit occasions, as far as
our power and activity reacheth. It ob-
ligeth us all in our several stations, ac-
cording to those opportunities God hath
afforded us, and those Abilities he hath
endued

endued us with, and those conditions of life his Providence has placed us in, to endeavour, as much as in us lieth, the Welfare and Prosperity, Ease and Happiness of all men; so that others may bless the Divine Goodness for us, the state of their bodies or minds being bettered by our imparting to them what God hath more abundantly bestowed upon us.

Contrary to which is a narrow, selfish, stingy Spirit, when we are concerned for none but our selves, and regard not how it fares with other men, so it be but well with us; when we follow our own humour, and with great pleasure enjoy the accommodations of our own state; when we think our own Happiness the greater because we have it alone to our selves; and no other partakes of it: which of all other things is the most directly opposite to that benign and compassionate temper, which our Saviour came, into the World by his Doctrine and Example to implant in men.

I shall not undertake to set before you the several instances of doing good to others, since they are so various and infinite, and our Duty varies according to our Circumstances and Opportunities, which are very different; and every one
may

may easily find them out by considering what good he would have other men do for him. What he should reasonably expect or would take kindly from those he converseth with, or is any ways related unto, all that he is in like cases to be willing to do for another : so that this doing good is a work of large comprehensive extent and universal influence ; it reacheth to the Souls and Bodies of men, and takes in all those ways and means whereby we may promote the temporal, spiritual, or eternal advantage of others. And to so happy and noble an Employment one would think there should be no need of persuasion. However I humbly beg your patience whilst I put you in mind of some of those Arguments and Considerations which seem most proper and effectual to engage men to the imitation of this blessed Example, *to do all the good they can in the World.*

I. This of all other Employments is *most agreeable to our Natures.* By doing good we gratifie and comply with the best and noblest of our natural Inclinations and Appetites. The very same Sense which informs us of our own Wants, and doth powerfully move and instigate us to provide for their Relief, doth also resent
the

the distresses of another, and vehemently provoke and urge us to yield him all necessary Succour. This is true in all men, but most apparent in the *best Natures*, that at beholding the miseries and calamities of other men, they find such yernings of their bowels, and such sensible commotions and passions raised in their own breasts; as they can by no means satisfy, but by reaching forth their helping-hand: and to deny our assistance according as our ability permits us, is a Violence to our very Natural Instincts and Propensions, as well as contrary to our Religious Obligations; our very Flesh, which in many other instances tempts us to sin; yet in this case prompts us to our duty.

This is a gracious provision God Almighty hath made in favour of the necessitous and calamitous; that since his Providence, for great reasons, is pleased to permit such inequalities in mens Fortunes and outward Conditions; the state of some in this life being so extremely wretched and deplorable, if compared with others; lest the sick and blind, and naked and poor should seem to be forgotten, or wholly disregarded by their Maker; He hath therefore implanted in men a quick

quick and tender sense of Pity and Compassion, which should always solicit and plead their cause, stand their friend, and not only dispose us, but e'en force us for our own quiet and satisfaction, tho' with some inconvenience to our selves, to relieve and succour the afflicted and miserable, according to our several capacities and opportunities. And this Sympathy doth as truly belong to Humane Nature, as Love, Desire, Hope, Fear or any other Affection of our Minds; and it is as easie a matter to devest our selves of any other passion as of this of Pity: And he who like the *Priest* and *Levite* in our Saviour's Parable of the wounded man, is void of all compassion, is degenerated not so much into the likeness of a brute beast, as of the hardest Rock or Marble. Thus *to do good* is according to the very Make and Frame of our Beings and Natures.

Hence it follows that it must be the *most pleasant and delightful* Employment we can chuse for our selves. Whatever is according to our Nature, must for that reason be pleasant: for all actual pleasure consists in the gratification and satisfaction of our natural Inclinations and Appetites. Since therefore the very Constitution and Temper of our Nature sway and

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prompt

prompt us to the exercise of Charity and Beneficence, the satisfying such Inclinations by doing good must be as truly grateful to us, as any other thing or action whatever that ministreth to our Pleasure ; and it cannot be more delightful to receive kindneses than it is to bestow them. A seasonable unexpected Relief doth not affect him that stands in great need of it with more sensible Contentment, than the Opportunity of doing it doth rejoyce a good man's heart. Nay, it may be doubted on which hand lies the greatest Obligation ; whether he who receives is more obliged to the giver for the good turn he has done him, or the giver be more obliged to the receiver for the occasion of exercising his goodness. When we receive great kindneses, it puts us to the blush ; we are ashamed to be so highly obliged : but the joy of doing them is pure and unmixed ; and this our Saviour hath told us, *Act. 20. 35. It is more blessed to give than to receive.* And some good men have ventured to call it the greatest Sensuality, a piece of Epicurism, and have magnified the exceeding Indulgence of God, who hath annexed future Rewards to that which is so amply its own Recompence.

These

These two advantages this Pleasure of *doing good* hath above all other Pleasures whatsoever.

(1.) That this Satisfaction doth not only just accompany the act of doing good, but it is permanent and lasting, endures as long as our lives. The very Remembrance of such charitable deeds, by which we have been really helpful and serviceable to others, our after-reflection upon the good we have done in the world doth wonderfully refresh our souls with a mighty joy and peace, quite contrary to all other worldly and corporeal Pleasures. There are indeed some Vices which promise a great deal of Pleasure in the commission of them, but then at best it is but short-lived and transient, a sudden flash presently extinguish'd. It perishes in the very enjoyment, *like the crackling of thorns under a pot*, as the Wise man elegantly expresses it; it presently expires in a short blaze and noise, but hath very little heat or warmth in it. All outward bodily pleasures are of a very fugitive volatil nature, there's no fixing them; and if we endeavour to make up this defect by a frequent Repetition and constant Succession of them, they then soon become nauseous; men are cloyed

and tired with them. Nor is this yet all; these sensual Pleasures do not only suddenly pass away, but also leave a sting behind them, they wound our consciences, the thoughts of them are uneasy to us; Guilt and a bitter Repentance are the attendants of such indulging our selves; Sadness and Melancholy come in the place of all such exorbitant Mirth and Jollity. These are the constant abatements of all outward unlawful pleasures. Whereas that which springs from a mind satisfied and well pleased with its own actions, doth for ever affect our hearts with a delicious relish; continually ministers comfort and delight to us; is a never-failing fountain of Joy, such as is solid and substantial; fills our minds with good hopes and chearful thoughts; and is the only certain ground of true Peace and Contentment.

(2.) This Pleasure and Joy that attends doing good doth herein exceed all fleshly delights, that it is then at the highest when we stand in most need of it. In a time of Affliction, old Age, or at the approach of Death, the Remembrance of our good deeds will strangely cheer and support our spirits under all the Calamities and Troubles we may meet with in this state. By doing good we lay up a treasure

sure of comfort, a stock of joy against an evil day, which no outward thing can rob us of. But now it is not thus with bodily pleasures; they cannot help us in a time of need, they then become miserably flat and insipid; the Sinner cannot any longer taste or relish them: nothing remains but a guilty sense, which in such time of Distress is more fierce and raging, especially at the hour of Death.

Yet even then, when all our former inordinate Pleasures shall prove matter of Anguish and Torment to us; when all the flowers of worldly Glory shall be withered; when all earthly Beauty, which now doth so tempt and bewitch us, shall be darkned and eclipsed; when this World and the fashion of it is vanished and gone; when the pangs of Death are just taking hold of us, and we are ready to step into another world; what a seasonable and comfortable Refreshment then will it be to look back upon a well-spent life? to consider with our selves how faithfully we have improved those talents God hath intrusted us with; how well we have husbanded our Time, Estates, Parts, Reputation, Learning, Authority, for the Glory of God and the good of other men. The time will surely shortly come, where-

in you shall vastly more rejoyce in that little you have laid out or expended for the benefit of others, than in all that which by so long toil and drudgery in the World you shall have saved and purchased. They are not your great Possessions, Lands or Estates, nor your Dignities and Titles of Honour, nor your eminent Places and Trusts, nor any external Advantages you have purchased or acquired, that at such a time will yield you any true peace or comfortable hope. What use you have made of them, and what Good you have done with them, is that which your Conscience will then enquire after, and accordingly pronounce its sentence.

3. *To do good* is the most Divine and Godlike thing. By it we do most especially become like unto God, who *is good*, and *who doth good*; and not only like him, but we resemble him in that which is his very Nature and Essence, and which he esteems his greatest Glory: for such is his Goodness, which doth as it were deify all his other Attributes and Perfections.

There is no Quality or Disposition whatever by which we can so near approach the Divine Majesty, as this of Beneficence, and delight in *doing good*. As for Knowledge and Power, the evil Spirits par-

*

take

take of them in a greater degree than the best men; but a man hath nothing of God so much as to *do good*. By contributing to the contentment of other men, and rendring them as happy as lieth in our power, we do God's work, are in his place and room, perform his office in the World; we make up the seeming defects of his Providence, and one man thereby becomes as it were a God to another. Hence this employment must needs be the highest Accomplishment and Perfection of our Beings. It is the only Argument of a brave and great Soul to extend his care and thoughts for the good of all men; and not to do so is a certain indication of a little narrow Spirit, contracted within it self and its own paltry concerns.

4. This is the very end of all the Blessings and several Advantages God hath vouchsafed to Men in this life, that by them they might become capable of doing good in the World; this is the proper use they are to be put to, for which they were designed by the Author and Donor of them; and if they are not employed to such purposes, we are false to our Trust, and the Stewardship committed to us, and shall be one day severely account-

able to God for it. For the Almighty and Sovereign Lord and disposer of all things both in Heaven and Earth hath assigned to every man his particular Place and Station in this World; hath given him his part to act on this great Theatre, hath furnished him with powers and abilities of mind and body fitted for several uses; in the due and regular improvement and management of which, every one may in some measure be helpful and serviceable to others. This our Saviour illustrates by his excellent parable of the *Talents*, St. *Matth.* 25.

There is no man, but God hath put many excellent things into his possession, to be used, improved and managed by him for the common Good and Interest: for men are made for Society and mutual Fellowship. We are not born for our selves alone, but every other man hath some Right and Interest in us; and as no man can live happily in this World without the help and assistance of others, so neither is any man exempted or privileged from being in his place some way beneficial to others.

It is with men in this World, as it is with the parts of the Body Natural. It is St. *Paul's* comparison, 1 *Cor.* 12. the Body
 * consists

consists of divers Members, which neither have the same Dignity and Honour, nor the same Use and Office; but every part hath its proper Use and Function, whereby it becomes serviceable to the whole Body; and if any one part fails or is ill affected, the whole suffers for it, and the meanest part is necessary for the good of the whole; so that *the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.* Thus hath God distributed several Gifts among the sons of men, or they by God's blessing upon their industry acquire particular Art, Skill and Experience, some in one thing, some in another, none in all; so that it is impossible, but that every man must want something for the Conveniency of his life, for which he must be obliged to others; upon which account it is most highly reasonable that he also himself should some way oblige and serve others.

But besides this there are many special Favours and Advantages which some men enjoy above others, which also are designed for the common Good and Benefit. It is plain that there is a very great Inequality among men both as to the internal Endowments of their Minds, and their external

external Conditions in this Life. Many more *talents* are committed to some persons than to others ; but yet we greatly mistake when we think them given us merely for our own sakes, to serve our own turns, and for the satisfaction of our own private Appetites and Desires, without any respect to other men. No, at the best they are but deposited with us in trust ; the more we enjoy of them, the greater charge we have upon our hands, and the more plentiful returns God doth justly expect from us : *for unto whomsoever much is given, saith our Saviour, of him shall be much required.*

This ought especially to be considered by all those who by reason of the Eminency of their Qualities and Dignities, and by their Superiority above others, have vast Authority over them ; whose Sphere is large and Influence great, who have many Dependents that court their favour, and whose interest it is to observe and please them ; what infinite good may such do in the World, especially by their Example ?

5. *Doing good* is the main and most substantial part of Christian Religion, the most acceptable Sacrifice we can offer, or Service we can perform to God ; and therefore

therefore do we so often find in Scripture all Religion summed up as it were in this one thing, it being the best expression of our Duty towards God, and either formally containing or naturally producing all our Duty towards our Neighbour; whence this is said to be the fulfilling of the whole Law. It is not enough that vve give to every man vvhhat is due to him. His Religion is but very little and of a narrow compass, who is only just; nay he that is rigidly so in all cases, hath no Religion at all. That I have wronged no man will be a poor plea or apology at the last day, for it is not for rapine or injury, for pillaging or cozening their Neighbours, that men at the last day are formally impeached and finally condemned; but *I was an hungry and ye gave me no meat, I was a stranger and ye took me not in*: you neglected to do that good which you had power and opportunity to do.

Some men are so taken up with their Courses of Piety and Devotion, that they have no time to do much good. If they be but temperate and just, and come frequently to Church, and constantly perform the duties of God's Worship; this they hope will carry them to Heaven, though they are notoriously covetous and

and uncharitable, and hardly ever do any good office for their Neighbours or Brethren. Some again there are who pretend to be of a more spiritual and refined Religion; spend their time in contemplation, and talk much of Communion with God, but look upon this way of serving God by *doing good* as a lower Attainment, and inferior Dispensation suitable to Children and Novices in Religion; and think that they are excused from these mean Duties: and yet read over the Life of the best man that ever lived, the founder of our Faith and Religion, and you cannot but confess what I have already shewn you, that the great thing he was most exemplary and illustrious for, was his unwearyed readiness to help and oblige all men; *he went about doing good*. And it is a Scandal raised on *our Church*, that we do not hold the necessity of good Works in order to Salvation, but trust wholly to Faith; for we hold and teach them to be as necessary as *Papists* themselves can or do, but then we say they are accepted by God only for the sake of Jesus Christ.

6. And lastly, Nothing hath greater Rewards annexed to it than *doing good*, and that both in this life and that which is to come. I have time now but just to mention

mention to you some few of those Benefits and Advantages that do neither naturally flow from it, or by God's gracious promise are annexed to it.

To do good with what we enjoy is the most certain way to procure God's blessing upon all we have; it doth entitle us to his more special Care and Protection. *Trust in the Lord, saith David, and be doing good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* The Divine Goodness cannot but be mightily pleased to see men, so far as they are able, imitating it self, and following the Example of God's Benignity.

For every good Office we do to other men, we have something to plead with God Almighty, to engage him to bestow upon us what we want or desire; not by way of Merit or Desert, but God himself graciously becoming our Debtor, takes what is done to others in such cases as done to himself, and by promise obliges himself to full Retaliation.

By this means we provide against an evil day that which will mightily support us under all the Troubles and Afflictions that may happen to us in this life; our good Works will attend us and stand by us at the hour of Death, as I have already

ready hinted to you; nay farther, our good Works will appear and plead for us before God's Tribunal, and will procure us, for the sake of Jesus Christ, at the hands of our merciful God, a glorious Recompence at the Resurrection of the just; for at the last and final reckoning, when all mens Actions shall be scanned and judged, the great King shall pass his sentence according to the good men have done or neglected to do in this life.

Nay, every way so great is the Reward of *doing good*, that even wicked men, who yet have been of bountiful tempers, and have had generous spirits, shall fare the better in the other World for those good acts of Mercy and Charity they have done here; and in this sense it is said (with which I end all) that *Charity doth cover a multitude of sins*, and to *cover sins* in the Scripture phrase is to forgive them.

Now of this saying there are several senses given, which I cannot stand now to recite, but the words are true in these two senses.

(1.) If he that is thus truly charitable, and hath done a great deal of good in his generation, be also endued with the other Virtues and Qualifications required in a Christian,

Christian, then tho he may have a great many Infirmities and Miscarriages to answer for, yet these failings shall be overlooked and buried in his good deeds; and then they mean the same vvith that of the Psalmist, *with the merciful God will shew himself merciful*, he vvill shew him all favour possible.

(2.) Or else secondly, if you understand these words, *Charity shall cover a multitude of sins*, as spoken of a person, who tho vitious in all other respects, yet out of principles of common Humanity or natural Goodness of temper, or greatness of Spirit, is very apt and inclined to do generous and great things for the good of the World; (which is a case that may sometimes happen) they mean this, that tho Charity alone vvill not be sufficient to make such an one happy in the other Word, because he is othervvise incapable of it, yet it shall be considered so far as to lessen his Punishment. He shall be in a less intolerable condition, (tho that be sad enough) than the cruel and uncharitable, or than they vvho have delighted in doing mischief.

(32)

A
SERMON

Preach'd at
WHITE-HALL.

The Second Sermon.

1 Cor. XI. 29.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.

THE Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which we are now to receive, is undoubtedly the most solemn and venerable part of Christian Worship, a most excellent Instrument of Religion, an Instrument of our Saviour's
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of mighty Use and Advantage to us, if we duly partake thereof; and yet there is hardly any part of Religion so little or so ill understood by the generality of Christians amongst us, as this Duty: which sufficiently appears from that great number of those who constantly join with the Church in all other publick Offices of Divine Worship, and yet wholly neglect the receiving of this Sacrament; or at least communicate so seldom, as if they looked upon themselves at liberty to do it, or not do it, as they thought best. I speak not now of the prophane Contemners of God and Religion, who despise this as they do all the other duties of God's Worship; but of those who pretend to the fear of God, and care of their Souls, and yet live at ease in the gross omission of this Duty.

Now among the many Pleas or Excuses with which men satisfy themselves in the Neglect or Disuse of this holy Communion; that which most generally prevails, and perhaps with some honest and well meaning persons, is the consideration of the words of my Text, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.* So dreadful is the Threatning and Punishment here

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denounced against those who receive this Sacrament unworthily, that men are apt to think it much the safer and wiser course, never to venture on a Duty, the wrong performance of which is attended with so great Mischief. Damnation is so terrible a word, and to be guilty of the *body and blood of Christ* (as it is said, *ver. 27. Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*) is so heinous a Crime, that it may seem the most prudent course for a man to keep himself at the greatest distance from all possibility of falling into it. Better never receive at all, than expose ones self to so great hazard by receiving.

I hope therefore it will not be thought altogether unprofitable to entertain you at this time with a Discourse on these words, wherein I shall endeavour to give you the full meaning of them, with the true and just Inferences and Consequences that may be drawn from them. In order to which I shall shew you,

I. What is meant here by *Damnation*.

II. What by *eating and drinking unworthily*.

III. How

III. How far this Text may reasonably scare and fright people from this Sacrament.

IV. What is the true Consequence from what is here affirmed by the Apostle ; *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself.*

I. What is meant here by eating and drinking *Damnation* to a man's self. The Original Word, which is here translated *Damnation*, truly signifies no more than *Judgment* or *Punishment* in general, of what kind soever it be, temporal or eternal. So that there is no necessity of translating it here by the word *Damnation* ; nay there are two plain reasons why it ought to be understood only of *temporal* Evils and Chastisements.

1. Because the Judgments that were inflicted on the *Corinthians* for their profanation of this holy Sacrament were only *temporal* ; verse 30th. *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

2. Because the Reason assigned of these Judgments is, *that they might not be con-*

demned in the other World, ver. 32. But when we are judged (where the same Greek word is used which in my Text is translated *Damnation*) we are chastened of the Lord, that we might not be condemned with the world. That is, God inflicted these evils on the *Corinthians*, that being reformed by these stripes in this life, they might escape that Vengeance which was reserved for the impenitent in another life : and therefore it could not be *Damnation*, that is, eternal *Damnation*, that was either threatned or inflicted upon them for their unworthy receiving.

The sum of what the Apostle means seems to be this ; that “ by prophaning
 “ this holy Sacrament they would pluck
 “ down some remarkable Judgment upon
 “ their heads. Of this, saith he, you
 “ have notorious instances among your
 “ selves in those various and mortal Diseases that have been so rise in your
 “ City ; and this God doth to warn you,
 “ that you may be awakened to avoid
 “ greater and worse Judgments that are
 “ future and eternal. Now this Punishment was extraordinary and peculiar to that time ; for there is no such thing found among us at this day, namely, that God doth suddenly smite all unworthy
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thy Communicants with some grievous Disease or sudden Death. Nor indeed are men afraid of any such thing, tho it is very plain that this is the true meaning of the words of my *Text*, that by such Prophaneness they would bring down some remarkable *temporal* Judgment upon themselves.

But I shall not insist any longer upon this, but take the word *Damnation* as we commonly understand it; and in that sense, to eat and drink *Damnation* to a man's self, doth imply, that by our unworthy participation of the Sacrament, we are so far from receiving any Benefit or Advantage by it, that we do incur God's heaviest displeasure, and render our selves liable to eternal Misery. And so proceed,

II. To enquire who those are that do run this great danger, they who *eat and drink unworthily*. Now this phrase of *eating unworthily* being only found here in this Chapter, for the understanding of it we are to consider what the faults were with which the Apostle chargeth the *Corinthians*, and we shall find them to be some very heinous Disorders that had crept in amongst them, occasioned by

their Love-feasts, at the end of which the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was usually celebrated ; which disorders therefore were peculiar to those times, and are not now to be found amongst us, as, v. 18. *First of all, when ye come together in the Church, I hear that there be divisions among you,* they bandied into separate parties ; and ver. 21. *In eating every one taketh before another his own Supper ;* that is, Whereas there was a Custom when they came together to commemorate Christ's Death, to furnish a common Table, where no man was to pretend any Propriety to what he himself brought, but was to eat in common with the rest, this charitable Custom these *Corinthians* wholly perverted : for he that brought a great deal, fell to that as if it were at his own House, and at his own Table, and so fed to the full ; whereas another that was able to bring but a little, remained hungry. With such Irreverence and Disorder did they behave themselves at the Lord's Table, as if they had been met at a common Feast : this the Apostle calls *not discerning the Lord's Body* ; that is, they made no difference between that heavenly Food and common Bread ; they ate the Sacrament as if it were their ordinary

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meat.

meat. *What* (saith he *ver. 22.*) *have ye not houses to eat and drink in?* ye may e'en as well stay at home and do this; there is nothing of Religion in this, nor is this to celebrate the Sacrament according to Christ's Institution, whereby we ought to represent his Death for the World, and to commemorate his Love, and to devote our selves to him in new and better Obedience, and not to make it a merry Meeting only to fill our own Bellies.

But this was not all; for they were also riotous and intemperate in these Love-Fasts. They play'd the Gluttons, and were drunk even when they received the holy Sacrament. Now this was so notorious and foul a Prophanation of the Holy Mystery, to make it an Instrument of Debauchery, that we cannot at all wonder that God should so severely threaten and punish such a high Affront and Violation of his sacred Ordinance. No Judgment could be too great or sharp to vindicate our Saviour's most excellent Institution from such impious Contempt. But now this is by no means to be extended to every little Failure or Omission in this Duty, or in our Preparation for it, as if that did render us such unworthy Recei-

vers as these *Corinthians* were, or streight consign us over to the same Punishment.

Those scandalous Irregularities and Excesses are here called *eating and drinking unworthily*, which were heard of only in the first Ages of the Church, when the Sacrament was always joined with these Love-Feasts, which were therefore in process of time wholly abrogated; and to prevent that Intemperance and Abuse they had introduced, it generally prevailed to receive this Sacrament fasting. But whatever faults may be found now amongst our Communicants, yet they cannot be charged with these mentioned in this Chapter. The worst of men, if they do communicate at all, do it with greater Reverence and more sutable Deportment than these *Corinthians* did. So that neither the Fault here reprov'd, nor the Punishment denounced, hath place now amongst us. What reason then is there, why this Text of Scripture should fright any people from the Sacrament, whenas there is neither the same Fault committed, nor the same Punishment inflicted?

Tho this be the just meaning of the words, yet because this plea of Unworthiness to receive is often insisted upon to excuse our neglect of this Sacrament,

I shall farther and more largely consider it by proceeding to the third thing I propounded to discourse of.

III. How far this Danger of receiving unworthily may reasonably scare and fright people from coming to this Sacrament. And here I shall offer these few things to the thoughts of all such as are seriously disposed.

1. In a strict sense we are none of us all worthy of so great a favour, and such a high Privilege as to be admitted to this Sacrament, or of such excellent Benefits as are conferred upon us in it. After all our care, after all our preparation to make our selves fit, yet still we must acknowledg our selves *unworthy but to pick up the crumbs that fall from our Master's Table*, much more to sit and feast at it. If we are not to receive this Sacrament till we can account our selves really worthy, the best of men, the more holy and humble they are, the more averse would they be from this Duty.

2. This Unworthiness is no bar or hindrance to our receiving this Sacrament. We are not worthy of the least mercy either spiritual or temporal which we enjoy; must we therefore starve our selves,

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or go naked, because we deserve not our food or rayment? We are not worthy so much as to cast up our eyes towards Heaven the habitation of God's holiness; but what then, Shall we never make our humble addresses to the throne of God's Grace, because we are not worthy to ask, or to have our petitions heard and granted by him? Shall we refuse any Favours the kindness of Heaven offers to us, because they are beyond our Merits, or more than we could challenge or expect?

It is not said here in the *Text*, he that is *unworthy* to eat and drink of this Sacrament, if he doth it, *eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*; if it were, then indeed we might all be justly afraid of coming to this Royal Feast, but he that *eateth and drinketh unworthily*. Now there is a great deal of difference between these two things, between a man's being *unworthy* to receive this Sacrament, and his receiving it *unworthily*, which I shall thus illustrate.

He, for example, who hath grossly wrong'd, maliciously slander'd, or without any provocation of mine treated me very ill, is, as ye will all grant, utterly unworthy of any kindness or favour from me. But now if, notwithstanding this
unworthi-

unworthiness, I do him some considerable kindness, and offer him some favour, his unworthiness is no lett or hindrance to his receiving it; and if he accepts it with a due sense and a grateful mind, and by it is moved to lay aside all his former Enmity and Animosity, and heartily repents him of his former Ill-will against me, and studies how to requite this courtesie, it is then plain that tho he were unworthy of the favour, yet he hath now received it worthily, that is, after a due manner, as he ought to have done, and that it hath had its right effect upon him.

So we are all unworthy to partake of this holy Banquet, but being invited and admitted, we may behave our selves as becometh us in such a Presence, at such a Solemnity. And if by it we thankfully commemorate the Death of our Lord, and renounce all our sins and former evil ways, and there give up our selves to be governed by him, and vow better Obedience, and are affected with a true sense of his Love, then, tho unworthy of so great a Favour, yet we have worthily, that is, after a right manner (as to God's acceptance) received this blessed Sacrament. But if now unworthy of so great Honour

nour and Favour, we also receive it unworthily after a prophane disorderly manner, not at all minding the End, Use or Design of it, without any Repentance for Sins past, or Resolutions of Amendment for the future, and without any grateful affection of Love towards our Saviour dying for us, we do by this means indeed highly provoke God Almighty, and justly incur his most grievous Displeasure.

3. Those who are unworthy, and are truly sensible of their own Unworthiness, are the very persons for whom this Sacrament was appointed, and for whose Benefit it was instituted. Were we not all sinners, we had no need of such means of grace as Sacraments are, nor of such Instruments of Religion. *Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. They that are whole need not the Physician, but they that are sick.* Now it is an idle thing for a man to be afraid to receive an Alms, because he is miserably poor, or to be loth to take Physick because he is dangerously sick. If we are truly sensible of our unworthiness, and, as we ought to be, duly affected with it, this is a great Argument and Motive to engage us not any longer to delay the use of these Means, but to hasten to the Sacrament, there to receive Supplies and Assistan-

Assistances futable and proportioned to our Wants and Necessities; the more unworthy we find our selves, the more we stand in need of this holy Sacrament, whereby our good resolutions may be strengthened and confirmed, and Divine Power and Grace communicated to us, to enable us by degrees to subdue all our lusts and passions, and to resist all temptations; and so by often receiving this Sacrament we shall every time become less unworthy to partake of it.

There hath been a great dispute in the World, whether the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper be a converting Ordinance or no, as Prayer, and hearing of the Word of God read or preached are allowed to be; and many there are that have been brought to believe, that it is a Duty incumbent on, or rather a Privilege belonging to none but great and exemplary Saints, to strong and well-grounded Christians; that this Sacrament is not sood proper for Babes and Novices, for those who often fail in their Duty, who are still only wrestling with their Lusts, but have not yet got the mastery or victory over them; that we ought first to be fully assured of our Salvation before we come to this holy Table; that this Ordinance serves

serves only to strengthen and confirm our Faith and Repentance, and all other Christian Graces and Virtues, but not to beget any of them in us.

Now here thus much must be granted, that this Sacrament doth belong only to those that are within the pale of the visible Church, only to baptized Christians, that do publickly own their Faith and Christian Profession; that it is no means of converting Jews or Infidels; and that even Christians by notorious evil lives, whereby they become scandalous to their brethren, and incur the censures of Church, may justly forfeit all their Right and Title to this Sacrament; and further, that it is a bold Prophanation of our Saviour's Institution for any wicked person, resolved to continue such, to presume to bless God for that Mercy and Love of a Redeemer which he doth not in the least value. Thus far we are on all hands agreed. But not now to engage in any matter of Controversie, I shall only say that I can see no reason why to one that is really sensible of his Sins and Miscarriages contrary to his Baptifmal Vow and Profession, and maketh some kind of Resolution to forsake them; why, I say, this Sacrament, as well as Prayer or any other Duties

Duties of Religion, may not be reckoned as a means of begetting true Repentance in him, of turning him from sin to righteousness, from the power of Satan to God : and for this I shall offer only this one plain Argument, which is obvious to every man, That if the Death of Christ it self, his bitter Passion, his whole gracious undertaking for us, was among other reasons designed by God also to convince us of the evil and danger of sin, to bring us out of love with it, and to engage us to a new and better life, surely then the consideration of the same things represented to us in the Sacrament, the commemoration of his Death and Passion there made, may also serve for the same great ends and purposes.

If Christ died that we should die unto sin, certainly then the Memory of his Death may justly be accounted a proper means of killing Sin in us; nay, what in the nature of the thing can be imagined a more likely Instrument to turn us from a life of Sin to the practice of Holiness, than the frequent consideration of what our Blessed Lord hath done and suffered for us? And if so, it cannot be necessary that this change should be compleatly wrought in us, before we ever solemnly commemorate his

his Bloody Passion; for that were to suppose it necessary that the End should be obtained before we use the Means.

It is not therefore absolutely necessary that we should be fully assured that we are in a state of Grace, and in God's Favour, and have repented enough, and truly forsaken all our sins, before we venture on this Sacrament; it is sufficient that we heartily and sincerely resolve against them, that we approach the Lord's Table with honest and devout Minds, that we be really willing and desirous to use all means to become better: and if thus disposed we come to the Sacrament, I doubt not but we shall find it a most effectual means for the enabling us to leave our sins, and to lead a better life. It is not our Unworthiness, but our resolving to continue in that state, that makes us unqualified for this Sacrament.

4. If therefore by your Unworthiness you mean that you live in sin, and are resolved to do so, and therefore dare not come to the Sacrament for fear you should farther provoke God Almighty, I will suppose that in this you act prudently and warily; but then I would advise you for the same reason, and on the same account, to leave off all other Duties of Religion

as well as this ; if you would act upon the same grounds, you ought to reckon it the safest way never to pray to God any more, nor ever again to appear in any religious Assemblies, nor to join in any part of God's solemn Worship ; for God hath often declared that he doth far more abominate all such formal, whining, cringing Hypocrites, and will more severely punish them than the open and bold Contemners of his Authority and Laws. *The prayer of the wicked man is an abomination to the Lord.* He hates the addresses of those who call him *Father* and *Master*, and in words acknowledge him, but yet continually do the things that are displeasing in his sight. His Soul loaths and nauseates all the services of impure Worshippers : You do but mock God ; basely fawn upon and impudently flatter him, when you present yourselves before him as his People and Servants, and yet secretly hate him and wish him out of the World. Nay for the same reason for which you forbear the Sacrament, e'en lay aside your whole Christian Profession, openly renounce your Baptism, deny your Saviour, disown his Religion ; for that is the safest course whilst you resolve to continue in Sin and Disobedience :

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for God's wrath shall be in the first place revealed against wicked Christians ; and better will it be in the last day for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, than for those who were called by Christ's Name, and yet did not depart from iniquity.

If this Pretence be true, that you go out of the Church when the Sacrament is to be administred, lest you should farther provoke God by unworthy receiving it ; by the same reason keep from the Church altogether, lest you as highly provoke God by being present at those Prayers you do not heartily join in, nor ever intend to live according to. Or rather (to speak yet more fully what is the true consequence of this) you now know your selves unworthy, and are resolved yet, at least for some time, to continue such ; alas ! what need such as you be afraid of this Text ? In this case it ought to seem indifferent to you whether you receive or not ; Damnation here threatened cannot be supposed reasonably to scare him from the Sacrament, who runs the constant hazard of it by living in known Sin. This can be no such terrible Word to an habitual and resolved Sinner. He that can swear and talk prophanely, and live intemperately and loosely, and with-

without any fear or regret commit Mortal Sin, in vain pretends fear of Damnation for not doing that which is indeed his Duty; for it is a most odd and ridiculous thing to be afraid of doing what our Saviour hath commanded us, whilst we are not in the least afraid Every day of doing what he hath forbidden us. How strange is this for men out of a dread of Damnation to neglect their duty; and yet at the same time not to be afraid to live carnal and sensual Lives? Never therefore let any amongst you, so long as you continue in your Sins, plead, that you are afraid you should offend your Saviour, if unworthily you eat his Body and drink his Blood, and therefore dare not communicate; for your daily practice confutes this Pretence, whilst you notoriously break his Laws, and violate his Authority, and scandalize his Religion.

You pretend fear of Damnation: no such matter, this is not the true reason of your abstaining from this Sacrament. You are rather afraid the Sacrament will engage you to leave those Sins you have no mind as yet to part with, that it will put you upon the practice of those Duties which are inconsistent with your Profit,

Pleasure, or secular Interest. You are not afraid of displeasing God, but of being too strictly tied and bound to please him. You are afraid lest that Solemnity should raise some Scruples in your minds which you have no leisure to consider of. You would not be troubled with such a serious business, you suspect you shall not be able to sin so securely and quietly after it as now you do.

Let not such therefore as neglect this Duty, invent any such pitiful Excuses, but confess plainly that they love Sin and the World too much, that they prize them above the Benefits purchased by Jesus Christ; that they resolve to go on in their Wickedness for some longer time, and that therefore they do not come to this Sacrament. They are loth to engage themselves so solemnly to do that, which they find in themselves no heart or will to perform. This indeed is the secret thought of many men, tho indeed it is a very foolish one: for they are very much mistaken who think themselves at greater liberty to do evil whilst they abstain from this Sacrament, for Christians are engaged by receiving this Sacrament to no other Obedience than they were before by their Baptism: it doth not so
much

much oblige us to new Duties, as engage us to make good those Obligations which our profession of Christianity hath already laid upon us.

5. And Lastly. If the receiving of this Sacrament were an indifferent Right or Ceremony, that might be done or omitted at pleasure, then indeed the great Danger there is in receiving it unworthily might in a great measure justifie our omission of it. But what if the Danger be as great, and the Hazard equal of not receiving it at all, as of receiving it unworthily? where then is our Prudence or Safety, when to avoid one danger, we run into another every whit as great; when for fear of displeasing God, we disobey a plain Command, and for fear of Damnation commit a damnable Sin? for I can call it no less, to live in the neglect and contempt of this holy Institution.

It is not very easie to determine which is the greatest Affront to God, or doth most highly provoke him, never to perform our Duty, or to perform it after a wrong manner; never to pray at all, or to be present at Prayers, but not to mind or regard what we are about; never to receive this Sacrament, or to receive it often, but make no difference between

what we eat and drink there, and what we do at our own houses. But however, he that receives this Sacrament, altho it be after an undue manner, seems to me to shew somewhat more respect to God and his Commands, than he who wholly neglects it. And besides, there is hardly any wicked Man that dares come to the Sacrament without some good Thoughts and Resolutions, or who is not for a little time before and after the receiving of it more careful of himself and his Actions ; and tho this doth not last long, but he soon returns to his former Wickedness, yet however this is something better than continuing in Sin and Wickedness without any Intermission or Cessation. Moreover, such an one uses the best means of becoming better, which by God's Grace at some time may prove effectual ; whereas he that casts off all these Duties is in a more desperate and irreclaimable state.

In short, were there neither Sin nor Danger in omitting this Sacrament, and yet so great Hazard in the receiving it unworthily, Prudence and Interest might engage us to chuse the safest side, and not to meddle with it at all ; but if we expose our selves as certainly to God's Anger

ger and Displeasure by wholly neglecting this Duty, as by performing it unduly, then these words of the Apostle can be no Pretence or Excuse for our abstaining from this Communion. For would not this be an odd way of arguing: because intemperate eating and drinking is very prejudicial to our health, and often breeds mortal diseases, therefore 'tis better never to eat or drink at all? Would it not be madness, lest we should kill our selves by a surfeit, to resolve to starve our selves by obstinate fasting?

And this shall bring me to the fourth and last thing I propounded to discourse of; which was,

IV. To shew what is the only true and just consequence which can be drawn from what is here affirmed by the Apostle, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself*: which is this; that forasmuch as our Saviour hath plainly commanded all his Followers and Disciples, to do this in remembrance of him; and yet on the other side, there is so great danger in doing it unworthily, that we should neither omit the Duty (for that would be a plain transgression of our Saviour's

E 4 Command)

Command) nor yet be careless in the Performance of it.

And this is the inference which the Apostle himself makes, not that the *Corinthians*, whom he blames so much for their unworthy receiving this Sacrament, should therefore forbear coming to it any more at all, but for the future they should examine themselves, and partake of it with greater reverence and devotion than they had used to do. Let the danger of receiving unworthily be never so great, the consideration of this ought only to make us so much the more careful to receive it after a right and acceptable manner, and to put us upon greater watchfulness over our selves when we meddle with such sacred things. This is the use we ought to make of these words of the Apostle, not rashly or precipitantly, without due preparation or consideration, to rush upon this holy Sacrament, but seriously to mind the end and design of it, and so duly to affect our spirits with the things represented to us by it, that they may make lively and lasting impressions upon us, and we may bring forth the fruit of all in a holy and unblameable conversation in the World.

To end all, I would not have any thing I have now said upon this Subject to you, so interpreted or understood, as in the least to take away from the Reverence you have of this Institution, or to lessen that Awe and Dread you have of receiving it unworthily; only I would not have men afraid of, or scruple doing their Duty. There is Preparation and good Disposition of mind required for Prayer and the right performance of other Religious Duties, as well as this of the Sacrament.

We ought therefore to be afraid of these three things.

1. Of neglecting to receive this Sacrament; for that is to live in disobedience to a plain Command of our Saviour.

2. Of receiving it unworthily, without Reverence or Attention to the meaning of it, without hearty Repentance and sincere Resolution of amendment; for that is to affront and prophane our Saviour's most excellent Institution.

3. Of turning to your evil courses after receiving it; for then your having taken this Sacrament will be a great Aggravation both of your Sin and Condemnation.

(58)

A
SERMON
Preached before the Late
KING
AT
NEW-MARKET.

The Third Sermon.

PROV. I. 10.

----- *If Sinners entice thee, consent thou
not.*

IN Scripture we often find that the Evil
Spirits are represented as *Tempters*,
going to and fro in the earth, and
walking up and down in it, seeking whom
they may devour; and to that end as fur-
nished with all manner of Wiles and De-
vices,

vices, by which they may ensnare and deceive Mankind. They would not be unhappy alone, and therefore bend all their Study and Cunning to involve Men in the same Ruin they have plunged themselves into.

Yet these are not our *only* Enemies, whom we are to watch against or resist: There are many in our own shape, who tho their Feet are not Cloven, yet drive on the same Design, and are the Devil's Agents, and use their Wit and Parts to set up his Kingdom in the World, by enticing Men to, and pleading for Sin and Irreligion. And this they do just for the same ill-natured reason; namely, to make others as bad as themselves, that they may be also as miserable; that this may a little comfort them against the gnawing fears of future Punishments, that if they should chance to befall them, as is threatned, yet they have made sure of Company enough.

And this may afford us one Consideration of no little force to secure us against the solicitations of Sinners, that tho they may pretend to great Love and Kindness, and tell us of the Excellency and Bravery of being wicked, and undertake to answer all the Scruples and
Coyneſs

Coyneſs of our Conſciences ; yet the bottom of all is only to engage us in the Perils and dangerous Adventures they have run themſelves into : They cannot endure to think that if the great Doctrines of Religion ſhould at laſt prove true, any ſhould be likely to fare better in the other State than themſelves ; they hope either by their Number to bear down God Almighty to pity and pardon, or at leaſt that when they are ſo many, they ſhall help one another more chearfully to ſuffer the worſt that can happen to them.

But now would we count it reaſonable for a man to perſuade us to be ſick with him ? or becauſe he hath undone himſelf and is loſt and ruin'd, that we ſhould therefore bring our ſelves into the ſame Circumſtances and Condition ? In our temporal affairs we are not thus eaſie and flexible, nor can Men in their wits by any means be prevailed upon to hazard their Lives and Fortunes for the gratifying the vain Humour of any deſperate perſon, who hath forfeited his own ; and why then ſhould we be ſo fooliſhly ſoft as to part with all that can be called truly good, and venture our everlaſting Concernments and immortal Souls only to bear thoſe company who are reſolved to
be

be damned? Wherefore of old in all places where Civility and good Manners have obtained, such as have taken up that vile trade of debauching others, and enticing them to Sin, have been always branded with marks of Infamy, and accounted and dealt with as the very Pests and publick Enemies of Mankind.

But I suppose there is not much need of convincing you that it is your Interest to follow this advice of the Wise-man. Every one will readily grant that it is good and wholesom Counsel, not to consent to the enticings of evil and wicked men; the only difficulty is in the practising of it, especially in a time when Sin is not only grown into Fashion, but into very great Reputation.

It would be well if the sad Complaints of the hideous Degeneracy and Profaneness of this present Age were as unjust as they are frequent; it is the humour of too many to admire and commend all the persons that lived, and every thing that was done before they were born, whilst they please themselves in nothing more than in continually lamenting and bemoaning the Sins and Misfortunes of their own days. And whatever times such had lived in, 'tis like they would
have

have pick'd out matter of Discontent, having no better way of shewing their own wisdom or goodness than by finding fault with others. But however, thus much is certain, that since the World is always so throng'd and thickly beset with wicked men (and we have no reason to doubt but that we at this time have our share of them amongst us) since the best of us all are so apt to be misled, surprized or betrayed into Sin, we have great need, if we would preserve our Innocence, to fortifie our Minds with all such Considerations as may help us to understand the restless Allurements and subtile Enticings of those, who not only themselves do things that are evil, but rejoice in making others do the same.

I shall at this time discourse only of these two Ways, by which those that entice Men to vitious Practices ordinarily prevail with them, *viz.* either by their Example, or else by Arguing for and Excusing of Sin; and shall endeavour to make out how unreasonable it is to be moved by either of them.

I. *Consent not when you are enticed to Sin by bad Examples.* He that is tempted only by his own wicked self, and drawn a-
way

way with his own lusts, doubts oftentimes and is afraid, and sometimes repents and forbears; but when his own inward Propensions and Inclinations are seconded and back'd with bad Examples, especially if they are numerous and given by men of Authority, Interest and Name in the World; when by them he is encouraged and urged to that which of himself he had no little mind to; then doth Vice become strong and triumphant, the Temptation is then at the full height, and it is hard for a Man to stand it out. When thus there is a Confederacy and Combination of Sinners; when *Wickedness joins*, as it were *hand to hand*, and draws it self into Leagues; when the Road is smoothed, and the Passage made broad and plain by the tramlings of others before us, then we are in great danger either of being hurried on in the Crowd, or else of being by degrees inveigled to venture our selves with those to whom we cannot but think we do owe a great regard. Vice then becomes popular and creditable; and he that startles at the commission of any Sin when he is alone, shall make no stop or scruple when he hath the Invitation and Approbation of so many; for he sins now by Consent and Sympa-

Sympathy, and hath the opinion of others to vouch him; when Conscience accuseth; or vertuous Men reprove him, he hath his Authorities ready to produce for his Wickedness, and can quote others to justify his Debaucheries.

Sin is infectious, and when it once gets head, and men dare be openly prophane, it spreads like a Contagious Disease; and tho for some time we should keep our selves untainted, yet by degrees we shall be apt to lose that Averseness and Abhorrence we had of it; it will not seem so strange and dismal a thing to us, it will become more familiar, and then we shall proceed to wish our selves free that we might also do the same; to long and hanker after a greater liberty, to think our selves too hard tied up, and then the next step is running with others into the like excess of Riot. The sense and apprehension we have of any Danger cannot but be much abated when we see the greatest part of Men continually to outbrave, and daringly to defie it: and it is hard to retain a just value for Goodness, when it is despised and contemned by those who are fam'd for their Wit and Prudence in other things.

But

But tho by experience we find that Examples do thus strongly influence men, yet that they should do so, Reason there is none: for what can argue greater stupidity and unmanliness than at a venture to take every thing for better for worse, and to go on only for company sake, and leave all matters, tho we are never so deeply concerned in them, to be judged of only by others? What doth Reason or Understanding advantage him who lives wholly by precedent, and is always what others please to make him?

“ But alas! it is very tedious and
“ troublesome for a man to examine his
“ own ways, and ask himself a reason of
“ every step he takes. It would cost too
“ much time and pains to be wary and
“ thoughtful, and consider always what
“ ought to be spoken or done next; this
“ is a dull and methodical way of living:
“ but to be always poised, to be indiffe-
“ rent to every thing, to wait the next
“ tide, and to follow the next hint, this
“ is gay, and free, and easie. But be it as
easie as it will, it is nevertheless no other
than the life of Beasts, who herd together,
and follow one another, and love to be
in the same track.

But more particularly ; men are led by Examples, and tempted to do as the most do, chiefly on one of these accounts, either that they may not be thought singular, or which is worse, rude and uncivil, or else that they may avoid Scoffs and Reproaches.

I. To avoid the imputation of Singularity : and this indeed must necessarily be laid to the charge of good and virtuous men, so long as the greatest part of the World is wicked and sensual : But then it is to be considered that ~~it is~~ such a Singularity as is most honourable, and redounds the more to our Credit, by how much the fewer are of our side. 'Tis true, to affect Singularity in any indifferent or trivial matter is unbecoming and ridiculous ; but men were never afraid of being singular in any Excellency : and tho Religion and Innocence may not always meet with that Esteem which is due to them, yet it is strange that any one should ever think them scandalous.

If this cast any disparagement upon Piety and Virtue, that there are but few in the World that heartily regard them, it does equally on all things that are extraordinary and really praise-worthy. Are men ashamed of being counted singular
in

in any Knowledge or Wisdom, in any Skill or Trade? and why should it be otherwise in the instance of true Goodness, the highest Perfection our Natures are capable of? Are not great Honours and Estates as liable to this exception, since there are but few that can deserve the one, or acquire the other? and yet men rather vaunt and glory in such things as these, which distinguish them from the vulgar Rout, and usually reckon those the most desirable Accomplishments which few are masters of? why then should this prejudice men against Religion, that the greatest part of the World are fools, and are contented to be miserable?

2. We must follow, say they, the examples of others, and do as the most do, or else we shall be counted rude and uncivil; we shall be thought ill-manner'd, and to want fashionable breeding. And this alone hath so far prevailed in the World, that I doubt not but there are many who make themselves seem to be worse than really they are, and boast of Sins which they never durst commit, only that they may not be without this Mark and Character of Gentility; who hypocritically dissemble Wickedness, that they may gain the Name and Reputation of

Gentlemen, and may not be thought precise or godly.

But surely it is a sign of a mean, low and base Spirit, and doth not sute with that Braveness and Gallantry of Mind, which is or ought to be in all Gentlemen, to suffer themselves thus to be usurped upon, and so tamely to submit to mere wicked Customs; and instead of all those good Qualities and Dispositions and virtuous Actions to which their Forefathers owed their good Names and great Titles, to value themselves or others upon the account of such Vices, as in former times were found only in Clowns and Beggars.

This indeed is the proof of a very wicked and degenerate Age, and a notorious sign that Irreligion appears with a very bold Face, when it is accounted a piece of bad Manners, and becoming only those of a mean rank, to own a Reverence for that Sovereign Majesty who made us all, and a due Respect to those Laws, which not so much his Power and Dominion over us, as our own Interest and self-love do oblige us to observe; when we shall be called Rude unless, besides the hopes of eternal Happiness, we foolishly hazard the loss of our Health,
Peace,

Peace, and every thing else that is truly valuable, for a momentary satisfaction, merely out of compliance with our company ; when to be able to walk, stand, or speak Sense, shall be thought an indecent thing, an uncivil trick put upon those whom we either chanc'd or were forced to converse with ; to name no more, when it shall be esteemed less dishonourable to be a Murderer than to forgive some petty Injury, or put up any small Affront. We should therefore in this case say as *David* did when he danced before the Ark of the Lord, and was derided for it, *If this be vile, I will yet be more vile than thus.* If Meekness and Patience, Chastity and Temperance, the fear of God and true Religion be uncivil and ungenteel, we will yet be more uncivil and ungenteel ; and I should as soon be persuaded that it was rude and clownish not to pledg one who drank to me in rank poison, as that it is any sign of want of good breeding and genteel accomplishments, to be wiser and more sober than the rest of the World.

3. Lastly, Men are tempted to comply with bad Examples and follow the multitude, that they may avoid Scoffs and Reproaches, and not expose them-

selves to the laughter and drollery of those who think every thing Wit that is impudent or prophane. But this surely is so little and inconsiderable, that it deserves not to be named with the least of those inconveniencies which attend a wicked life ; for what hurt can it be to us to have those speak ill of us, whose very commendation and good word would be our greatest Scandal and Reproach ? and shall we to escape their irreligious Scoffs and foolish Jest, justly merit the reproof of all wise Men, and make our selves liable to the censure of those whose Opinion and Judgment alone ought to be regarded ?

Were we but once throughly convinced of the Truth and Excellency of that Religion we are baptized into, how happy it would make us in this Life, and what great things it assures us of in the future ; no Flouts nor Railleries would any more be able to shake our purposes of good Living, than they are to persuade a rich Man out of his Estate and large Possessions.

But farther, the best way to preserve our Reputation, even amongst wicked Men, is to be true to those Principles which we have first espoused ; for let

Men

Men say what they will, they have a secret Respect and Veneration for all those whose Goodness is exemplary and conspicuous (which appears sufficiently by their envying and snarling at them) and they inwardly scorn none more than those whom they know to be guilty of those Vices which yet they themselves tempted them to; and he that will be drunk himself, will yet be sure to laugh at another whom he sees in that condition.

But let us suppose the worst, what is it that they can say of us? Only that we are nice, and squeamish, and curious; that we have not yet learned to live at random, nor perfectly subdued our Consciences; that we weigh and consider our Actions, and use our Reasons and Understandings, and believe we were born into the World for some higher Ends than pleasing our Senses, and gratifying our Appetites; that we are not indifferent to Health and Sickneſs, Peace and Disquiet, Life and Death; that we think there is somewhat in the World besides what we daily see; that we provide for a State which we may very soon enter upon, and trouble our selves with Thoughts of what will become of us after we are dead, and the like: but if this be all,

we ought to pray to God that we may constantly live under such Ignominy, and die under the Disgrace.

To what I have already said on this Subject, I shall only add, That if bad Examples, even against our Reason and Interest, do so far prevail with Men to their utter Undoing, what mighty Power and Influence would good Examples have, enforced with all the Arguments for and Advantages of Religion? What an Age of Virtue, and Quiet, and Happiness should we enjoy, if Men of Dignity and Renown, of Parts and Understanding, of Birth and Fortune, would freely and conspicuously offer themselves to the World for Patterns of Life and Conversation? Thus they might entice others to be Good, and soon retrieve the Honour of our Religion, and bring it again into Credit and Repute. Were such Mens Lives as good and holy as their Profession is, Sinners would soon be put out of Countenance, and be ashamed to appear in the World; their Party would be made inconsiderable, and they would have but little power to draw others over to their Side; for there is not a more winning and taking Sight in the World, than the Life of a Christian led exactly according to the
Pre-

Prefcripts of his Religion. And were there not in all Ages some such Persons of Authority and Fame, whose Zeal for Religion inspires them with so much Courage, as that they are neither ashamed nor afraid of being Honest and Innocent, whatever the mad World may say or think of them for it (I say, were it not for such) we should soon lose not only the Power, but even the Form of Godliness too. And God only knows how many daily make Shipwrack of their Consciences, only because they have not Spirit enough to endure to be out of the Mode and Fashion,

II. But I hasten to the second thing propounded, which was to shew how unreasonable it is to be enticed to Sin, by such as argue for it, and would endeavour to excuse it: for there are many that are not altogether thus easie, and complaisant, as to follow merely for Company, nor so lazy as to take up every thing on Trust, but they are Men of Prudence and Discretion, who desire first to be satisfied whether what they are enticed to be prudent and safe; they like a wicked Life well enough, could they be but furnished with some small Reasons and Arguments
for

for it, by which they might justifie their Choice, and stop the mouths of their Consciences. I shall just mention these four Ways whereby Sinners ordinarily entice such as these to join with them; either, 1. by representing the Pleasures; or, 2. by propounding the temporal Advantages which attend Sin; or else, 3. by speaking slightly of the Evil of it; or lastly, by persuading them there is no Danger in it.

1. Men entice others to Sin by propounding to them the Pleasures that are to be found in a loose and wicked Life. " They tell them that the Laws of Religion are fitted only for the dull and " Phlegmatick, unactive and Hypochondriack, who grudge at others enjoying " those Delights which themselves are not " capable of; that Nature designed we " should freely use whatever she hath provided for our Entertainment here, and " was not so unkind as perpetually to " torment us with the Sight and Presence " of such things as we are not permitted " to taste nor touch; that Heaven indeed is the Lord's, and He dwells there, " and doth what pleaseth Him best, but " that the Earth by his Grant and Permission is ours, and who shall interrupt or " disturb us? That God hath left this
" lower

“ lower World to us to take our Pastime
“ therein ; and that that Man makes the
“ best Use of it, who improves it most to
“ serve his own Pleasures ; that to live
“ honestly, scrupulously and virtuously,
“ is to be buried whilst we are alive ;
“ and that to order all our Actions according
“ to stinted Rules and Precepts, belongs
“ only to Slaves, and those who
“ are of a servile Disposition : but what
“ greater Pleasure, say they, than to be
“ ungovernable and uncontrolable, to
“ satisfy every Appetite with its proper
“ Object ; to deny our selves nothing that
“ our Lusts or Passions crave, in every thing
“ to gratify our own Humour and Fancy,
“ and to trouble our Heads with nothing,
“ unless it be to find out new Delights
“ and surprizing Extravagances ?

But what are all these now other than the vain conceits of mad Men, who during their Phrenzy do many times think themselves the wisest, greatest and richest Men in the World, and take as much delight in such idle Dreams as others do in real Enjoyments ? But this Pleasure lasts no longer than till they recover the use of their Understandings ; and therefore in this Case we are not to give credit to what wicked Men say, nor judg of the
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the Pleasure and Content of their Lives by what outwardly appears. *Even in Laughter the Heart is sorrowful*, saith Solomon; and it is very possible for one who seems to spend all his Days in Mirth and Jollity, yet really to be in a very uneasy Condition all the while; which appears from this, that such as are sensual and licentious find it best to keep themselves in a continual Hurry and Heat, and as soon as they are tired with one sin, presently to betake themselves to some other, for fear they should unhappily light upon a Bible or a sober Thought: for this Reason it is that they hate nothing so much as to be alone, and are forced to converse with themselves; and that if they chance to fall into any Affliction or Calamity they are the most dejected and disconsolate Persons in the World: all these are certain Signs that they are haunted with dreadful and ghastly Apprehensions and Jealousies, which will ever and anon be crouding in, and sometimes even when they are taking their fill of Pleasures.

But on the other side, Religion denies us no Pleasures which are manly and suitable to our Natures, and forbids us only such Excesses as in themselves are both tedious and nauseous; and layeth the Foundation

dation of that solid Peace and Joy, which no external thing whatever is able to shake or discompose.

In short, if to be carried away with every Vanity and Whimsie, to be swayed by every unreasonable Humour and Lust, to be a Slave to every Man's Frolick and Beck; to try the utmost Strength of our Bodies, to run a course of all Diseases, to undergo all Reproach and Infamy, to spend our Estates and Time in pursuit of short Life, rotten Bones, and wretched Poverty; if this be Pleasure, then for certain there is enough of it to be found in a dissolute and vitious Life.

2. With such as are not altogether so fool-hardy, and but a little better Husbands of their Health and Estates, this kind of Philosophy will not take at all; but if you would get them into a good Opinion of Wickedness, it must be by propounding to them some temporal Advantage. Virtue or Vice is very indifferent to such, but what they can save or get most by, is always the best. Profit and Gain do strangely mollifie Sin, and take away much from the Odiousness and Ugliness of it; it shall be the most just and equitable thing in the World, if it can help us to raise a new Family, or recover

cover one that is decayed ; if it may serve to maintain our selves or Relations, if by it we may oblige and obtain the Favour of any great Men, who will be so condescending as to admit us into a Society with them, tho it be only in their Vices : for Men are in the worst Instances ready to please and humour those they hope to get something from, or upon whom they depend.

But to this I shall reply nothing, but only ask our Saviour's Question, *What shall it profit a Man to gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul ? or what shall a Man give in exchange for his Soul ?* If we sell our Integrity and Hopes of future Happiness only to get a little of this World, we make a foolish Bargain. And I hope I need say no more in this place, since those only who are made of the basest and coarsest Metal, and are of poor and degenerate Spirits, are capable of being ensnared by this Temptation.

3. Another way Men have of enticing others to Sin is by assuring them, that there is no such great Evil in it as is commonly believed : " That when once we
 " have conquered our Fear of sinning, we
 " have seen the worst of it ; that the Evil
 " of Sin lies most in a little Scandal that
 " is

“ is cast upon it by same doting Philoso-
 “ phers, or melancholy Enthusiasts, or
 “ some covetous Usurers, who will not
 “ be at the Expence of it, or by those
 “ who receive Tythes to declaim against
 “ it ; that the Nature of Good and Evil
 “ hath been always matter of Dispute,
 “ and there is hardly any Vice but what
 “ hath been not only approved but re-
 “ warded by some whole Nation or o-
 “ ther ; that at the best Religion is only
 “ the politick Contrivance of some wise
 “ Governours, who knew how to ma-
 “ nage and make advantage of the Sim-
 “ plicity and Credulity of ignorant Peo-
 “ ple ; but that all things are in their own
 “ Natures indifferent.

Now is it not strange that Men should
 ever be persuaded, that it is as good to
 kill as to obey ones Parents ? that we de-
 serve as much commendation when we
 repay Kindnesses with Ill-Will and Inju-
 ries, as when we relieve those that are in
 necessity ? that Cruelty, Treachery and
 Malice are as amiable in themselves, and
 as innocent Dispositions, as Mercifulness,
 Fidelity, and good Nature ? And why may
 we not as well believe that Wisdom is to
 be found only in *Bedlam*, and that all
 that hath been ever spoken or done by
 Men

Men, hitherto counted in their Wits, hath been indeed only the Effect of Madness and distemper'd Brains ? Tho some politick Men, for notable Ends, have cunningly made common People for this great while to imagine quite otherwise. But I forbear.

4. And lastly ; That which prevails most powerfully is to persuade Men that there is no great Danger in Sin. “ Some Sins
“ may indeed prove inconvenient, but
“ the Pleasure recompenseth that ; some
“ may be of ill Report, but the Profit
“ will pay off that Score ; and if Sin
“ should chance to have any Evil in it,
“ what’s that to us when we are dead ?
“ the only Fear is of an after-reckoning.
And therefore do they who would fain sin without Control , especially labour that they may free themselves and others from all Suspicions of a future State ; raking up every trifling Objection that hath been of old used by any of the Atheistical Philosophers, and have been a thousand times answered ; and inventing new ones as far as their Wit serves them. But if after all there still remain any Doubts concerning another Life, then they plead how little we know or understand of it, or how absurd it is to think that a Man shall

shall be for ever punished for what he did by Mistake or Surprize, or strength of Passion or height of Blood, or good Nature or Civility, or to save his Life, or to maintain his Reputation, Family, or the like

But will nothing convince Men of the certainty of future Punishments but their feeling of them? Or do they think that God hath as little regard for those Laws which He hath made, and by which He will govern and judg the World, as wicked Men themselves have? But should we grant all that can be asked in this Case, and suppose it very doubtful whether our Souls are immortal, (and surely no Man will pretend to prove it impossible that they should be so) nay should we suppose it great Odds that there is not a future State; yet that Man doth nevertheless most notoriously betray his want of Prudence and Discretion, who will not contradict his own brutish Inclinations, and deny himself some short Pleasures, and chuse that Course of Life which our Reason no less than our Religion doth recommend to us, rather than run the least hazard (though it were of a hundred to one) of being for ever miserable. And thus much concerning being enticed to wicked Practices.

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And now I might discourse at large of another sort of enticing, which is to erroneous and pernicious Doctrines, and of such as go about to inveigle and corrupt our Judgments, and debauch our Understandings by seducing us to the Belief of Opinions no less wicked than false. But I shall at present only crave leave briefly to shew,

1. What danger Men are in of being seduced by such Temptations.

2. What is our best Armour and Security against them.

1. What Danger we are in of being enticed from that Profession and Belief which is publicly taught and own'd amongst us: which Danger arises partly from the Earnestness, Importunity, or the Arts that subtile Men use to bring us off; but most especially from the Doctrines themselves which they would learn us, and instil into us, which are such as are most pleasing and grateful to one who delights in his Sins; such as cannot but be most acceptable to him, as giving him Hopes of Heaven, tho he deny himself very little for it; such as lay the Grounds and Foundations of sinning chearfully without any fear or remorse; and therefore as long as the greatest Part of the World

World love Vice and Ease, will succeed and be greedily entertained.

It is no hard matter to persuade Men to believe, what they before-hand wish were true; and there needs no great store of Proof or Arguments to recommend those Opinions to the sensual and prophane, which give them leave to fulfil their Lusts without any regret of Conscience or dread of Punishment. Is it not a comfortable Doctrine, and will it not be readily embraced by every resolved Sinner, that after a long wicked Life, at the last gasp a bare Sorrow for Sin out of fear of Hell, with the Priest's Absolution, shall at last free him from eternal Pains, and take away the Guilt of his Sins, so that he need not be afraid of any thing besides a sudden Death, which happens but seldom? When he is at any time disturbed with the sense of his dangerous Condition, when the forced remembrance of his Sins doth gall and fret his Mind, and fill him with Fears and melancholy Thoughts, what a Relief must it needs be to him, to be assured that it is but going to a Priest, and confessing his Sins, and undergoing some small Penances, and he is safe? For then he may go on in his full Career with the greatest Security imaginable,

nable, then he may sin with Judgment, and commit all manner of Wickedness with Discretion.

He who hath no mind to part with his Lusts, is easily persuaded that they are invincible; nor is it very difficult to make him, who is loth to take any pains or be at any trouble for keeping of Christ's Commands, to believe that they are impossible to be kept, and that our Saviour fulfilled even his own Law in our stead, and that we have nothing to do but to believe that He hath done all, and be thankful.

In a word, where the Obscurity of Scripture, or the Difficulty of the Matter, or the weakness of our Understandings have caused one to mistake; multitudes have been drawn aside to the most pernicious Errors by their Lusts and secular Interests, and carnal Designs, and love to Gain, Sloth or Sensuality: and by this chiefly are the several dissenting Parties amongst us maintained, and do encrease their Numbers, to wit, by levelling the Doctrine of Christianity to Mens corrupt Inclinations and Passions, whilst we of the Church of *England* dare not be so false either to our own Trust or the Souls of Men, as to give them Hopes of everlasting

lasting Bliss on any other Condition but that of living godlily, righteously and soberly in this present World. From all which follows,

2. That our Security against such Temptations doth not consist in much Reading and great Learning, in our skill in Controversies, or Cunning in managing a Dispute, or Ability of discerning between good Argument and Sophistry, so much as in an honest Mind and humble Heart, an unfeigned Desire of knowing, and sincere Endeavour of doing the Will of God. Him who is thus minded, God by his infinite Goodness is engaged not to suffer to fall into any Error of mischievous Effect; and as for other mistakes wherein a good Life is not concerned, God is ready to overlook and pardon what is the result only of the Imperfection of our present State: besides which, Honesty of Mind, or love to Virtue, is in it self and its own nature our best Preservative against being infected with any bad Opinions.

I am far from taking upon me to judge or condemn those that were born and bred up, and have lived well under any Forms of Religion different from what is established amongst us (for it is very

possible for Men to hold Opinions very wicked, and yet not perceiving nor acknowledging the just Consequences of them, to live very good Lives) yet this is true, that one that designs nothing so much as pleasing God and saving his Soul, and is willing to take any pains for it, and hath no By-ends to serve, will not desire to be excused from the Mortification of his Lusts, subduing his Appetites, crucifying his Flesh, and from the Severities of a Holy Life, by substituting in the room of them Pilgrimages, vain Oblations, bodily Austerities, or such formal Devotions as very bad Men may perform, and be very bad still. Those Principles which most advance the Honour of God, by laying the strictest Obligations on Men to all manner of Goodness, he will hearken to and readily believe: but if they serve the end of Avarice or Ambition; if they are apt to make Men dissolute or licentious, lazie or presumptuous; this alone to such a one will be Reason sufficient utterly to reject them, let them be propounded to him with never so much advantage or subtilty.

I shall conclude all with this, that did I know any *constituted Church* in the World, that did teach a Religion more

holy and useful, that delivered Doctrines in themselves more reasonable, or in their Consequences tending more directly to the Peace of Societies and the good of every particular Person, to the promoting of Piety and true Morality, and the discountenancing of Sin and Vice; that did give more forcible Arguments for the one and against the other; that did lay greater stress upon a pure Mind and a blameless Life, and less upon voluntary Strictnesses and indifferent Rites and Ceremonies than we do, I would very soon be of that Church, and even entice all I could to it: but till such a one can be found, nay so long as it is manifest that all the zealous opposers of the Church of *England* do hold Opinions either destructive of, or in their plain Tendencies weakening the Force of all the Precepts, Promises and Threatnings contained in the Gospel, and such as if they do not encourage Men to, yet at least furnish them with Pleas and Excuses for their Wickedness; I am sure it is our Interest no less than our Duty, if we sincerely love God and our Souls, and have any real Desire of our own or others Welfare, faithfully to adhere to that Church we have the Happiness to be members of, and vigorously to maintain and defend it.

A
SERMON

Preach'd at
WHITE-HALL.

The Fourth Sermon.

R O M. XII. 16.

---Be not wise in your own conceits.

THERE is hardly any Vice that Men do so readily condemn in others, and yet so easily overlook and excuse in themselves, as this of Self-conceit, or a fond Opinion of their own great Wisdom and Understanding. None of us can endure that another should assume to himself continually to prescribe to us, or usurp so far upon us, as to be always imposing on us his own private
* Customs,

Customs, Humors or Manners, as if we had no Wit or Judgment of our own whereby to govern and order our own Affairs: and yet it is to be feared, most of us, who call this intolerable Pride in another, are so deeply in love with our selves and our own Ways, that we cannot forbear to censure and despise, to charge with Folly and Ignorance, all that do not believe and practise just as we our selves do: Every one thus in his own vain Imagination presuming himself wise and good enough to set a Pattern, and give Law to all round about him.

It is the Observation of the great French Philosopher, *That the most equal Distribution God hath made of any thing in this World is of Judgment and Understanding, because every man is content with his own, and thinks he hath enough:* And though as to the outward Gifts of Nature or Fortune he be willing to yield to others, yet he doubts not but he himself is as far removed from a Fool, hath as large a share of Reason and Discretion, is as able to manage himself and his own Business as any other whatever. Whence it is that all Men are apt so confidently to lean unto, and rely upon their own Understandings, so peremptorily to trust to
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and follow their own Judgments, so resolutely and inflexibly to adhere to their first Choices and Determinations, scorning and taking it in great snuff and dudgeon, to be taught, advised, check'd or controlled by any.

Now this is to be *wise in our own Conceits*, against which the Apostle here in my *Text* cautions us. When any Man hath a vast and undue Opinion of his own Powers and Faculties, and thinks of himself above what is meet; when he will hearken to none other, nor believe any one but just himself; when he knows all things, does all things, is all things to himself, and within himself alone, not needing (at least in his own big Thoughts) any ones Help, Counsel or Assistance; In short, when he rates and values himself above his true Worth, and despises others, and judges meanly of his Betters, then a Man may be said to be wise in his own Conceit. Which Self-conceit undoubtedly lies at the bottom, and is the original Cause of all Atheism and sceptical Disputes against Providence and Religion, of all undutiful Carriage towards Governours and Superiours, and of all those uncharitable Separations and unchristian Divisions that are so rife amongst us, and do

do so sadly threaten the ruin both of our Church and State.

Whereas on the other side, the great Foundation of all true Religion and civil Order, the only effectual Means of procuring and advancing Peace, real Wisdom and Truth amongst Men, is an humble and lowly Esteem of our selves, a modest Diffidence of our own Apprehensions, a hearty and serious Acknowledgment of our own Defects, and a willingness to be instructed, directed, ruled and governed by others who are better and wiser than our selves.

I shall at this time propound to you some plain Instances, wherein this sort of Pride or Self-conceit doth shew it self, particularly in matters of Religion, together with the Folly and Mischiefs of it.

I. This Self-conceit shews it self in being confident and positive about things which we do not understand, and in intermeddling with Affairs which do not belong to us.

II. In being obstinate and pertinacious in some singular Fancies and Opinions, tho upon never so slight Grounds at first believed and entertained.

III. In

III. In affecting to impose our own Humours and Conceits upon others, and in despising and condemning all that are not in every thing just to our own Mind and Persuasion.

I. This Self-conceit appears in being confident and positive about things which we do not understand, and in intermeddling with Affairs which do not belong to us: When we reject every thing as false which we cannot presently comprehend, and damn every thing, of which we cannot easily give a satisfactory Account; when we *speake evil of those things which we know not*, as St. Jude says of some in his days; when nothing shall escape us which we do not straight arraign and bring to the Bar, nor any thing pass with us for wise, good or decent, but what is exactly fitted to our own Palat, and suited to our raw and unwary Notions of things; when we measure and judg of the Nature of God, the Counsels of Heaven, the Methods of Providence, the Constitutions of our Governors, the Doctrines of our approved Teachers, the reasonableness of publick Laws, the Designs and Undertakings of other Men, Truth and Falshood, Good and Evil, only according to the agreement

greement or disagreement of things with our private Fancies, childish Prejudices, and rash Judgments. But more particularly :

I. Hence it is that Men are apt to quarrel with God and Religion, and endeavour either to dispute or rally them out of the World. Into this one Principle, I think, may be resolved the most considerable (if any such there be) nay almost all the Objections that ever were framed against the Existence of a God, and the Truth and Certainty of Religion, *viz.* that there are many things commonly taught and believed, which some pert young Sinners cannot by any means understand, and therefore all of it must presently be false.

They cannot possibly frame a Notion of a Spirit or immaterial Substance. Every thing they think of is clothed with corporeal Accidents; they cannot conceive an infinite Being, nor solve all the difficulties about Eternity, Omnipresence, Omniscience, and the like; and therefore *the whole Idea of an invisible Power*, as one of the most conceited Men in our Nation says, *is feigned only by the Mind, or imagined from Tales publickly allowed of.* The Resurrection seems a very unlikely and improbable Story. *How can these things be?*

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It is past their finding out why God did not send Christ sooner into the World, if there be no Salvation to be had without Him. It seemeth to them very absurd and unworthy that the Son of God should appear here in so mean a Condition, and die so shameful a Death. They understand not the Reason of some of God's Laws, and think they themselves could make better. They conclude the Parts of this visible World might have been much more conveniently ordered and contrived than now they appear to be, if all were managed and conducted by an infinite Power and Wisdom: and thus rather than in any case doubt or suspect their own want of Understanding, they turn Atheists or Scepticks, and renounce the most certain and plainest Truths. God shall not be at all, unless he please to be and do just as his Creatures would have him. These now are the Persons that conceit themselves the only Men of Parts and deep Reach, who will not be born down by a popular Faith, who search and dive into the very Bottom of things, and have alone happily smelt out that grand Cheat and Juggle with which the rest of Mankind hath been so long abused.

I know not one Objection or Doubt
against

against the Being of a Deity and Providence, but what is thus rais'd only by Pride, and an arrogant Opinion of our own Understanding, as if nothing could be either true or reasonable, but what is perfectly within our own Ken and Cognizance. If such conceited and haughty Persons cannot apprehend the Usefulness of any part of the Creation; if any thing happens in the World that seems to them confused and disordered; if their Wisdoms cannot discern the End, Benefit and Design of every thing that falls out, presently they either charge God with Folly and ill Contrivance, or banish him out of the World, and impute all to blind Fortune or inexorable Destiny. Whereas indeed it is only their own Ignorance they ought to accuse, and others may perchance comprehend what they cavil at; nay they themselves may possibly arrive to the complete Knowledge of that hereafter, which now seems so mysterious to them.

Let us but suppose God infinitely wiser than we poor Mortals are or can be, and that he may do and order many things for good and great Reasons, which yet we who can see but a little way, and consider but a few things at once, are not able as yet to grasp or find out: Let us, I say, but suppose

suppose our Understandings in this State imperfect and limited, and capable of far greater Improvement in another, and all these Scruples of the Atheist presently vanish into nothing. Thus you may observe, with my Lord *Bacon*, that no great Proficients in Philosophy, who have really improv'd their Minds and Reasons, have ever been Atheists; but such only as have had a little smattering of it, and being puffed up with a small pittance of Knowledge, became presently ready to conclude they understood all things; and being wise in their own Conceits, did therefore huff against every thing they were not able to render a Reason of. And if you consult the Experience of these days, you will find those only to swagger and hector against Religion who have a lofty Opinion of their own Learning and Parts, begot and maintained by a slight and superficial Skill in Philosophy, by a little dabling in the Mathematicks and Mechanicks, and a small share of Wit and Drollery, enough to render themselves the Scorn and Compassion of all truly wise and good Men: but who art thou, O vain Man, that thus exaltest thy self against God, and settest up thy puiſne Wit and Understanding in competition with his Eternal Reason?

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'Tis strange that when Men find themselves at a loss, and utterly to seek about the Nature of things visible and sensible, about the ordinary Appearances of this World; when it is easy for a Man but of little Parts to raise such a Mist about the plainest Truths, and invent such Difficulties and Objections as shall puzzle the sagest Philosophers handsomely to solve and unriddle; when Men do and must believe several things, the Causes of which they can only guess at, nor can ever be certain they are in the right; when a Loadstone's drawing of Iron, the ebbing and flowing of the Sea, the striking Fire out of a Flint, shall find Mens Wits imployment enough, nor shall they ever be able perfectly to satisfy themselves or others about them; when they are forced in such things as they see daily before their Eyes to confess their Ignorance, and the uncertainty of all their Reasonings: that yet, I say, when they come to discourse of such things as are plainly above their Reach and Capacity, being invisible and infinite, they will believe nothing but what they can fully comprehend, and count all that absurd which they cannot satisfactorily explain. This is the first particular Instance of that sort of Self-conceit which

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consists in meddling with things we do not understand, nor do belong to us.

2. Then also we meddle with things we do not understand, and which do not belong to us, when we take upon our selves to give peremptory Accounts of God's providential dealings with the Sons of Men, when without control we pass our rash Verdicts upon God's Actions, and sit in Judgment upon the various Occurrences of this World, accusing and arraigning God of Arbitrary Tyrannical Government, if every thing happen not according to our Minds, as we had beforehand wished or projected; if those we love much thrive not so well, or if our Enemies prosper more, and grow greater in this World than we would have them; when we offer to prescribe to Providence, and teach God how he should rule the World, and dispose of his Favours: When we dare clamour and mutiny at God's Proceedings, imagining that he hath not done well, or that we our selves could have done better; that if the Government of Mankind were but committed to our care (as the Chariot of the Sun is said once to have been to *Phaethon*) we could order and determine things more wisely and equally, and to better advantage.

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This is a most notorious piece of Arrogance, thus saucily to affix Senses and Meanings on God's Providences, where He has given us no Rule to judg by; and to interpret them according as our own Interest, Prejudice, Passion, or some other Vice doth sway us; to bring Arguments for any Way or Sect from temporal Successes, or to condemn any who differ from us by reason of some Calamities or unfortunate Accidents that may have befallen them. This shews us mightily conceited of our selves and our own Judgments, when we think God so fond of our private and singular Sentiments, as that all his Providences must needs serve only to vindicate and countenance our side, and disparage those which are contrary to us. This is busily to pry into God's Secrets, and it is the greatest Affront we can put upon him, thus unwarrantably to pronounce concerning his Actions, as if we were of his Cabinet-Council, and had particular Revelations of all the Designs He carrieth on in the World. This is to exercise our selves in great Matters, and such as are too high for us: for what Man is he that can know the Counsel of God? or who can think what the Will of the Lord is? for the Thoughts of Mortal Men are mi-

serable, and our Devices are but uncertain. And hardly do we guess aright at things that are upon Earth, and with Labour do we find the things that are before us; but the things which are in Heaven who hath searched out? And God's Counsel who hath known?

3. Another Instance of this sort of Self-conceit may be in private and illiterate Persons pretending to expound the most difficult and obscure places of Scripture, and to unfold and determine the most nice and curious Questions in Theology. There is enough in holy Scripture plain and easy to employ the Thoughts and Lives of private Christians; and yet it is too true that these parts of it, tho they alone contain our necessary Duty, are quite overlooked, at least not near so much studied or regarded, as those that are most mysterious and dark: and thus even amongst common People you will find not a few that are more positive and dogmatical in their Interpretations of Prophecies, mystical Speeches, and the Book of Revelations, than any sober Divine that hath made the Bible his study for many years. Whether this ariseth from the increase or decay of Knowledge amongst us, I shall not stand now to inquire: but so it is, that many a zealous Mechanick amongst

amongst us sets up for a Judge of Orthodoxy ; and having learn'd a great deal of Scripture by rote, and a few terms of Art, shall dictate as magisterially concerning the difficultest Points in Divinity, as if he had sat all his Life long in the infallible Chair. And indeed I am apt to think this is peculiar to us in *England*, at least that we are more notorious for it than those who live in other Countries ; and that not only now in our days, but that we have been so in former times : for I find it amongst the Observations made by an *Italian* in *Queen Elizabeth's* days of glorious Memory, that the common People of *England* were wiser, or at least thought themselves so, than the wisest of other Nations : for that here the very Women and Shop-keepers are able to judge of Predestination, Free-will, Perseverance, and to demonstrate the Divine Right of a Lay-Elder, and were better able to raise and answer perplexed Cases of Conscience, than the most learned Colleges in other parts of Europe : and he concludes with this serious Remark ; That those Persons who were most busy in Disputations and Controversies, and finding out the Mistakes of their Governors and Teachers, had always the least of Humility, Mortification, or the Power of Godliness.

Of all the several kinds of Fops that are, there is none more impertinent, troublesome and justly ridiculous, than a gifted Brother full of his Visions and Illuminations, who can split a Hair, and smell out a Heresy I know not how far off; who *thinking that he knoweth all things, knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.* It is good Advice therefore of the wise Son of Sirach, *Be not curious in unnecessary Matters, for more things are shewed unto thee than Men understand.*

4. This sort of Self-conceit which consists in meddling with things we do not understand, or do not belong to us, appeareth in nothing more than in opposing our own Prudence and Discretion to the Constitutions of our Governors, and the Determinations of our Superiors in Matters relating to publick Peace and Order; and a great many such there are who are never satisfied unless every thing be decreed and appointed just as they themselves think best and most fit. Hence they spend most of their Time and Discourse in ~~advancing~~ and descanting upon the Actions of their Superiors, of which they are yet most incompetent Judges; in taxing and inveighing against their Proceedings, tho never so far out of their Sphere and Capacity

capacity; in finding fault with their Conduct, and picking quarrels with their Orders and Commands. What a happy World would there soon be, thinks such a grave Politician, if all things were settled according to that Model which he hath framed in his own Conceit? How well would the State be secured, how quietly would the Church be governed, how decently would Divine Service be performed, how would all Interests and Parties be pleased, how soon would all Fears and Jealousies vanish if he had but the management of Affairs, or his Counsel might be heard? How soon would there be a thorow Reformation of all that is amiss, would the King but please to think him worthy of such a place of Power and Authority? In short, let things be well or ill administred, still, if his hand be not in it, he finds matter of Dislike and Complaint; or if it do chance that he hath nothing at all to object, yet he will give you a grave Shrug or Nod, and shake his empty Head, as if all were not well, and he knew some great Matter which he durst not utter. Alas! what an unhappy thing is it that such a prodigious wise Man should be so little taken notice of or regarded? Thus every one almost, conceited

of his own Politicks, invades the Office of a Counsellor of State, and acteth a Prince or Bishop, and positively determineth what Laws are fit to be repealed, what new ones to be made; what Ceremonies in God's Worship ought to be retained, what to be abrogated: and thus we confound and disturb that Order and Subordination which God hath placed in the World, and render the Magistrate's Office altogether useles, and as it were dethrone and depose those whom God hath set over us. It is the Office of our Governors to take care of the publick Peace and Safety, and to make such Laws as shall seem to them most conducing thereto, which we are bound to submit to, whether we judg them expedient or not; for if no Laws or Constitutions of our Governors were to take place but only such as every one should approve of, the Authority of the Magistrate would signify nothing, but every Man would be his own Lord and Master, which would necessarily introduce the greatest Disorder and Confusion.

5. And lastly. Hence it is Men are so busy and pragmatikall in intermeddling and interposing in the Concerns and private Affairs of their Neighbours, or any

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others they have the least knowledg of, putting their Sickle into every man's Corn, peeping into every man's House, listening at every ones Window, to furnish themselves with Matter for Censure and Observation: and by thus thrusting themselves into every man's Business, they usurp undue Authority, they assume without just Title, Superiority and Jurisdiction over others, infringe their Liberty, and implicitly charge them with Weakness and Incapacity to dispatch their own Affairs without their Direction. The conceited Man will not allow to others their share of Discretion, but monopolizes and engrosses all Wisdom to himself; and if any thing happens well with others, it was he to be sure that gave the first hint and advice; but if things go otherwise than well, "Why, the Fool would not be governed, he may e'en thank himself for it, he would not hearken to good Counsel. Such a one is in at all things, is of all Trades and Professions, understands all Arts and Sciences, is fit to regulate all Disorders, make up all Differences, carry on all intricate Designs, able to conquer all Difficulties, and remove Mountains; he is ready to undertake any thing, tho never so much above his Observation
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and Experience ; to him all ought to repair for Satisfaction and Direction ; he speaks nothing but Oracles, and to his Decisions all ought to submit, and perfectly to acquiesce in his Judgment. But this shall suffice for this first sort of Self-conceit, which consists in meddling with things we do not understand, or do not belong to us.

II. This Conceit of our own Wisdom is shewn in being obstinate and pertinacious in some singular Fancies and Opinions, tho upon never such slight grounds at first believed and entertained. There is none so apt to run into gross Mistakes and Absurdities, nor yet so hard to be made sensible of them, as one that over-values his own Parts and Wisdom ; for he hath not Patience enough to consider and examine any thing justly and thoroughly, he counts it a Disparagement in any case to suspend and enquire, he understands all things at first sight, and by Instinct ; and thus if he judgeth rightly, he hath good Fortune, but if not, if he be in Error, it is impossible ever to convince or reclaim him ; for he is impatient of all Opposition, disdains all Counsel, cannot brook the least Contradiction, nor endure

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to be gainsaid; he scorns all Instruction or Rebuke, is galled to the quick, and takes it for an insufferable Affront if you yield not to him in every thing he says. It is as safe to give a Man of Honour the Lie, as to dispute what such a Dictator affirms; you must receive all his grave and wise Aphorisms with a deep Silence and profound Reverence, or else you lose his Favour and Friendship for ever. The proud Man will teach all, learn of none, will not suffer any one besides himself to have or use any Understanding in his Company, or to be able to do or say any thing well: what hopes then of doing him any good, who swelled with an overweening esteem of his own Abilities, never so much as once dreams that it is possible he may be deceiv'd? It is the saying of Solomon, Prov. 26. 12. *Seest thou a man wise in his own Conceit? there is more hopes of a Fool than of him.*

I perswade you not to deny or doubt of any Truth which indeed you know, nor to be uncertain and wavering in your Belief of any thing which by good Argument and Reason is made plain and evident unto you, but only that you would not be too passionately confident of what you do believe, and that you would not
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be stiff and dogmatical about such things as good and wise Men have in all Ages differ'd about. All I advise is, that we should all of us thoroughly consider our own Ignorance, and the scantiness of our Faculties, and how easy it is for us to mistake, and be very ready to distrust our selves, and our own Apprehensions; that we should bear a due regard and deference to the Judgments of other Men, and quietly hear and carefully attend to what is said against any thing we do believe, as well as to those who are of our own Mind; that we should be willing to be taught (and untaught too what for a long time we have held as uncertain) by those who are better and have more Understanding than our selves, especially by those whom God hath set over us for that very end; that we should weigh things without Partiality or Passion, and enquire out Truth with the same indifference a Traveller doth his Road, being concern'd only to find out the right way; and that we should be ready at any time to change our Opinion where we see good reason for it, and account it no shame to go over to the better side; for it is a fairer and nobler Victory to vanquish an old inveterate Prejudice or Mistake, than in wrangling

ling Dispute to silence the most subtile Adversary. And in disputable things, which are capable of Opposition and Reason on both sides, for a Man to confess his Doubt, is a great Testimony of a good Judgment, and an excellent Disposition, and a Preparative to sound Wisdom; whereas to talk confidently and positively about such things, hath been always given as the sign of a Fool and illiterate Person, of a fiery and clamorous Bigot, of an ill-manner'd and conceited Zealot.

What I have said of Opinions may easily be applied to Vices, where the case is the same; for it is this Self-conceit which hardens a Man in all his Sins, and makes him deaf to all good Instructions, whilst he thinks so well of himself, that even his very Defects he accounts Beauties, and can excuse, if not commend, his own Deformities.

III. Lastly, This Conceit of our own Wisdom appears in affecting to impose our own Humors and Apprehensions upon others, and in despising and condemning all that are not in every thing just of our Mind and Perswasion.

I have heard not a few complain of the Impositions that our Laws Ecclesiastical
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do lay upon their tender Consciences; but yet give me leave to say I never met with any Man that made this Complaint, but who, notwithstanding his dislike of the present Constitution (and there never was nor never will be one that all Men shall like) I soon found would be well pleased if his own way were settled instead of it, and Laws made to oblige all others to the practice and observance of what he in his own Wisdom thinks best and fittest. And tho he doth not approve of what the Magistrate hath appointed or commanded, yet he would have the Magistrate and every one else approve of that; and that only which he in his own Conceit fancies and commends.

And thus every one almost sets up for himself, and would have a Church of his own framing, a Liturgy of his own inventing, and a Government of his own devising: and it is impossible for us to be satisfied as long as we will submit to no Tribunal, nor ever be pleased unless every one be forc'd to believe and practise just as we our selves would have them.

That all Men should be of the same Mind, and agree in the same Conceptions and Apprehensions of things, is impossible, and no more to be expected in this Life,

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than that all Mens Faces and Complexions should be alike. As long as there are some places of Scripture hard to be understood, several things pertaining to Religion which are not fundamental, and therefore not plainly determined, but remain doubtful; as long as Men have different Educations, Tempers, Constitutions of Body, Inclinations of Mind, and several Interests to serve; as long as there are different degrees of Knowledge and Understanding in Men: In a word, as long as Ignorance and Confidence continue in the World, so long there will be Disputes and Controversies about Matters of Religion, even among those who yet agree in the same Faith and Profession. Nor hath our Christianity provided any infallible way or means of silencing or putting an end to such Differences about less Matters and speculative Points.

We have indeed plainly propounded to us whatever is necessary for us to know or practise in order to Salvation; and for the understanding of this, nothing else is requisite but an honest Mind and sincere desire of Learning. As for other things which are not of so great moment, and are more obscure, it is sufficient that in all cases we be modest and humble, teach-
able

able and governable, that we preserve Peace, Order and Charity, and I doubt not but God will pardon the Errors of those who are upright and well-minded. What horrible Presumption therefore is it in us to judg, despise, condemn our Brethren for those Mistakes (if they be so) which God will overlook and pass by? What devilish Pride is this (I cannot speak too earnestly in the case) to endeavour, like the old Tyrant, to stretch or cramp up every Man to the proportion of my Bed? to presume that God will judg and count with Men just by the rate and measure of my Understanding, and damn every one that hath either more or less Wit than I have? for either of these may be the occasion of his differing from me. It is the greatest Oppression and Usurpation imaginable to assault or try to overcome the Reason of another by any thing else but Reason: and this is the uncharitable Spirit that so eminently discovers it self in the *Roman Church*, which pretending to Infallibility and an unerring Authority over Christians, condemns and persecutes all who will not submit to her Determinations, and believe as she doth. And with the same Spirit many, that hate Popery enough, are too much leavened;

I mean those who appropriate the glorious Names of the Godly, People of God, Orthodox Christians, only to their own paltry Sect or Conventicle, and reprobate all that have not arrived to the same skill in their *Dutch Divinity* with themselves.

Many Divisions and Subdivisions there are now among us, and God only knows when they will be at an end; but if you would know from whence they arise, it is easy to tell you in the words of Solomon, *Only of Pride cometh Contention*; or of St. James, *Whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your Lusts?*

Self-Conceit, and Self-Love, whatever is pretended, is the great and principal Root of all our Religious Quarrels and Debates; whilst Men too highly value their own private Judgments in things doubtful and indifferent, think meanly of the Determinations of their Superiors, and care not tho they sacrifice Peace and Charity to the promoting of any trifling Opinion they happen to be fond of.

I find it quoted in one of the Reverend Hooker's ordinary Sayings, that the Scriptures were not writ to beget Disputations and Pride, and Scruples and Opposition to Government, but Charity, Humility, Moderation,

ration, Obedience to Authority, and Peace to Mankind; of which Virtues (as he always added) *no Man ever repented himself at his Death-Bed.* And if ever Unity and Christian Concord, and Peace, and Brotherly Love be again recovered, and prevail again among us, it must be by these Means and Principles.

It is a vain thing to think to bring all Men to one Mind, but yet one would hope it not impossible to persuade Christians to a mean opinion of themselves, that *in Lowliness of Mind each should esteem others before himself*; to a dutiful Subjection to their Betters in things under their charge and ordering; and to a mutual Forbearance and Charity where they cannot presently agree: and this would do every whit as well as if we were all of one mind.

Several Expedients have been propounded for the uniting us, and reconciling our Differences; some are for Toleration, others for Comprehension, others for the strict execution of Penal Laws: but alas! neither these nor any other are likely to have any effect upon us till we learn Humility and Modesty, till Pride and Self-conceit, and all imperious Affectation of imposing our own Singularities upon others

The Fourth Sermon.

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others be rooted out of the World; till we learn to submit to our Betters, and in indifferent things not to oppose our private Opinions to the publick Determinations of the Church. This one Virtue of Humility would go farther towards the putting an end to all our terms of Distinction and unchristian Separations, than all the Writings or Disputings, all the Laws and Proclamations about the Church have hitherto done. Whatever is the cause of the Error, Pride is always the cause of the Quarrel, that makes the Breach and forms the Party.

Let but all amongst us agree together in common to mortify our Pride and Arogance, and conceited Esteem of our selves, and base Contempt of others, and the simple Truth will prevail in the World; or at least there will be no more of these unchristian Separations and Schisms, but Peace and Unity will be establish'd and secur'd amongst us.

To sum up all I have said. *Be not wise in your own Conceits.* Affect not things above your Skill and Reach. Meddle not with what is beyond your Capacity, or out of your Sphere; small Abilities and great Confidence ordinarily make the most inconsiderable and ridiculous Creature in Nature.

Think it no Diminution in some things to confes your Ignorance, in all weighty Business to ask for Counsel and Advice: trust not too much to your own Judgments and Discretions.

Think that your Governours and Teachers may be wiser, and know better what is for the publick Good, and what is fit and decent, than you can possibly do. Give other Men leave to understand as well as you; and make not your selves the Standard of Wisdom, nor take upon your selves to bear down all Mankind, or to command in all Companies; nor expect that every one should yield to your Humours, and deny their own Inclinations that they may gratify yours.

Do not pertinaciously pursue any thing wherein you are singular; examine all things, even those you may have long believed to be true, with diffidence of your selves, and suspicion of your own Judgments: hear calmly, debate soberly and rationally, and allow other Men their turn to speak, and attend to what is said against you with as eager a desire of learning, as you do to what is discoursed on your own behalf.

Think how often formerly you have been deceived, and forced to retract
your

your Error; and that when you grow older, and get greater Experience, you may chance also in many things to change your Mind. Be not apt to think meanly of, or severely censure, or superciliously disdain those that differ from you. *Wo unto them, saith the Prophet, that are wise in their own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight.* There is nothing more odious and distastful to God or Men, than the imperious domineering and insulting Spirit and Temper of the Self-conceited; nor yet any greater Sport and Diversion to his Company than his grave Looks, his formal stiff Carriage, his starch'd set Discourse, his lofty Pretences, his cunning Conjectures, his *Utopian* Projects, his sly and crafty Commendations of himself, his wise Remarks upon all Things and Persons; and thus the Fool empty of all true Worth, and full of himself, struts and swells and admires himself, but is laugh'd at by every body else.

What on the other side is more graceful and amiable, more lovely and charming, than Humility and Modesty, a mean Estimation of our selves, and a willingness to yield and condescend to others? It renders us no less acceptable to Men than to God; it hath a singular Obligingness

and Agreeableness in it self, tho we have nothing else to give us advantage.

To conclude all: When we had rather obey than rule, follow than lead; when we disdain not to learn of the meanest, despise no body besides our selves, do not think it reasonable to magnify our selves above other Men, but set a just value upon those Abilities they are endued with, in Honour preferring others before our selves: When every one thus minds and contents himself with his own Business, and the Offices of his particular Calling, contains himself in that Rank God Almighty hath placed him in, studies to act his own Part well and to the Life, and is most busie in mending himself; then, and not till then, will the Times mend, and we may expect God's Blessing upon us. But when every common Souldier thinks he can order things better than his Captain, and leaves his own Station to direct his Officer, and every Caprain neglects his own Company to teach and instruct the Commander, what can follow but Mutiny and Disorder, if not utter Confusion? *Be not wise in your own Conceits.*

The Fifth Sermon.

S. MATTH. XV. 19.

For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts----

AS it is God alone that knows the Thoughts of Man, so his Commands alone directly reach to them, and no little part of Religion consists in the due government of them; whence it is commonly laid down as a Rule of interpreting any of God's Laws, that tho only the outward Action be expressly commanded or forbidden, yet it must be extended to the inward Thoughts, Affections and Dispositions of our Minds; and he that appears very innocent and unblamable as to his Words and Actions, may yet really in the sight of God, and a true account of Things, stand guilty of the greatest Wickedness by reason only of his impure, malicious, or otherwise evil Thoughts.

Thoughts indeed are free from the Dominion or Power of Men; we may conceal or disguise them from all the World,

we may deceive the most cunning and subtle, by speaking and acting contrary to our Minds, by pretending what we never mean, by promising what we never intend; and if we betray not our selves, no Man can find us out, and we ought to judg one of another only by what is visible and notorious: but yet our Thoughts are absolutely subject to God's Authority, are under his Jurisdiction who is omniscient, who knoweth them afar off; who seeth not as Man seeth, nor judgeth as Man judgeth; for *the righteous God trieth the Hearts and Reins*, discerneth the most hidden Workings and inward Motions of our Souls, is conscious to all the Wandrings of our Fancies and Imaginations, is acquainted with all our private Designs and Contrivances, and knoweth our secret Ends and Intentions: so that in respect of the divine Laws and Judgment, our very Thoughts are as capable of being really good or really evil as our Actions.

Now *Thoughts* here I understand in the largest Sense, as comprehending all the internal Acts of the Mind of Man, *viz.* not only simple Conceits, Apprehensions, Fancies, bare pondering or musing of any thing in our Minds, but also all the Reasonings,

sonings, Consultations, Purposes, Resolutions, Designs, Contrivances, Desires and Cares of our Minds, as opposed to our external Words and Actions. Whatever is transacted wholly within our selves, of which none are conscious but God and our own Souls, I understand here by Thoughts.

But then by evil Thoughts I do not mean the bare thinking of any thing that is evil, or the apprehending or considering what is sinful; for this of it self doth no more pollute or defile our Souls, than seeing a loathsom ugly Sight doth hurt the Eye.

The Prophet indeed tells us, *that God is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, and *that he cannot look on Iniquity*, that is, not with the least degree of Complacency or Approbation; he cannot endure it, nor will he always bear it: but yet for all this, God seeth all the Sins that are committed in the World; *for he beholdeth Mischief and Spite, to requite it with his Hand*, as David tells us *Psal. 10. 14.* and it is necessary, when he forbids it, punishes it, or pardons it, that Sin must then be the Object of the Divine Understanding in all those Acts that are conversant about it. *The Eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.*

Thus

Thus our blessed Saviour, tho he was free from all Sin, yet when he was tempted by the Devil, no doubt had in his Mind the apprehension of that Evil he was instigated to by that wicked Spirit; it was all at that instant represented to his Thoughts: but since his Will did not in the least comply with or incline towards it, since the Motion was rejected with infinite Abhorrence and Dislike, he contracted not the least Guilt thereby.

A bad Man may often think of what is good, may entertain his Mind with Speculations about God, his immortal Soul, a future Life, the Benefits purchased for us by Jesus Christ; may employ himself much in the Study and Meditation of the Scriptures, divine and spiritual things, only to exercise his Wit, to satisfy his Curiosity or inquisitive Humour, to furnish himself for Talk or Dispute, to appear learned, or the like; nay he may take great pleasure in thinking of such Objects, and in using his Reason, Judgment, Invention or Fancy about them, as other Men are delighted in the Study of any other Sciences, or in any acquired Knowledge. Yet all these Thoughts about good things are not, in a moral Reckoning, good Thoughts, nor is the Man at all morally
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the better for them, if his Will do not join with, nor is governed by them. If he be not pleased with, if he doth not entertain such Thoughts upon some other Accounts, there is no more Religion or Virtue in fixing his Mind upon God, than there is in thinking of the Sun, or Moon, or Stars, or any Proposition in the Mathematicks, or any other innocent thing or Notion; for thus an Atheist may consider much God's Nature, and Attributes, and Providence, only to pick a Quarrel with Him, or find out something to object against them.

And on the other Side, the best Men may, and sometimes must, think of those things that are sinful; how else should they ever repent of them, beg God's Pardon for, or resolve against them? There is no reading in the holy Scriptures, or any other Histories, wherein the evil Actions and Speeches of wicked Men are recorded; there is no living or conversing in the World, where so much Evil is every day committed, without thinking of that which is sinful: but then in good Men the thought of any such thing is always with Grief and Detestation, they think of it as of a thing that is most hateful and pernicious to them; as Men think of a
Plague

Plague or Mischance, shivering at the very naming of it, and praying to God to preserve them from it. Thus our Thoughts are not to be called or counted evil only from the Object of them.

Nor yet farther, by evil Thoughts do I understand any sudden Thoughts, starting up in our Minds before we are aware, which will not I believe be imputed to us as Sins, tho if consented to, they are undoubtedly evil; for nothing will be reckoned to us as a Sin, or punished as such, but what is someway or other voluntary, and might have been help'd or avoided. Now such first Motions of Sin (as we commonly call them) which come upon us, *nobis non scientibus nec volentibus*, without our Knowledg, and against our Wills, are only the Exercise of our Virtues when presently check'd and contradicted; but when consented to and delighted in, they then bring forth Sin, and Sin when it is finished brings forth Death.

But to be more particular, I shall first of all shew you when our Thoughts may be counted voluntary, and we are truly and justly answerable for them. Secondly, propound to you some of the several Kinds of evil Thoughts. Thirdly, lay down some practical Rules for the due government of our Thoughts.

I. I

I. I shall shew when we are justly answerable for our Thoughts, or when they may be reckoned voluntary; and here I shall only give these three Instances.

1. When evil Thoughts are plainly occasioned by any thing that was voluntary in us, then they are to be accounted voluntary and sinful. What our Thoughts shall be, depends very much upon the Choice of the outward Objects that we converse most with in the World, and they will be oftenest on those things which we delight most in, and accustom our selves most unto. So far forth therefore as our Company, Discourse, Employments, Entertainments, Books, Recreations, Wine, nay I may add Diet too, do contribute to the stirring up in our Minds wanton and lustful, covetous or ambitious, angry or revengeful Thoughts, so far are such Thoughts voluntary in us; and tho they may come upon us, and arise in our Minds without any actual Consent or Command of our Wills, yet we are justly answerable for them, as having by some wilful Act of our own disposed our selves for such Thoughts.

By Sensuality, and Looseness, and Intemperance, and indulging themselves in
bodily

bodily Pleasures, Men may so debase their Minds, that hardly any Thoughts shall offer themselves but what are beastly and lewd, or at best trifling and useless. Empty, light, vain, foolish, extravagant Thoughts are the natural Product of Idleness, Sloth, Pride and Luxury. So that tho what we shall think of be not at all times in our power, yet it is in our power in a very great measure to abstain from those things which are apt to incite evil Thoughts, and minister fuel to them; from all Incentives or Provocations to inordinate or filthy Imaginations. And as far as we our selves give occasion to the raising up of evil Thoughts in our Minds, so far are they voluntary and imputable to us.

2. When evil Thoughts proceed from gross supine Negligence and Carelessness, then are we accountable for them: when we keep no Guard at all over our Minds and Fancies, but give them free Liberty wildly to rove and ramble, and let what will come into our Thoughts; if they then prove vile and wicked, it is very much our own Fault, and we must answer for them, because we then willingly prostitute our Minds to every Lust and Vanity. And when we set the Doors wide open without

out any Watch or Guard, we must blame our selves if dishonest Men enter in sometimes as well as good Friends.

Indeed, notwithstanding all our Care to secure our selves, Thieves may perchance break in upon us, or creep in unawares; whilst we sleep or intermit our Watch, (for we cannot be always upon the Guard) the Enemy may sow some Tares, inject and dart in some evil Thoughts. Tho we keep never so strict an Eye over our selves, and endeavour to the utmost to keep our Souls pure and chaste, yet sometimes by Surprise, through casual Non-attendance and Inadvertency, or the Cunning and Activity of our spiritual Enemies, a base wicked Thought may suddenly possess our Minds, nay and abide in us for some time before we take notice of it: but then the Mind is mostly passive in this; it is ravished rather than voluntarily commits Lewdness: this is our Weakness and Infirmary only; which God is always ready to pity and pardon.

Our Souls are active and busie, they cease to be and exist, when they do not think of something or other. Now if we do not take care to furnish our Minds continually with good and useful Matter
for

for our Thoughts, they will soon find out something else to exercise themselves upon; and when we let them run loosely and at random, and think at all adventures as it happens, we then tempt the Devil to chuse a Subject for us, we expose our selves to the Wildness and Extravagance of our own vain Imaginations; and when we keep no Watch, no wonder tho we be over-run with swarms of vagrant Thoughts. When therefore our evil Thoughts arise from gross Neglect and Carelessness, they then may be accounted voluntary, and charged on us as Sins.

3. Tho evil Thoughts may be involuntary at the first starting of them, being occasioned by what we could not avoid hearing or seeing, or coming upon us un-awares, or proceeding from the Temper and Habit of our Bodies, or the accidental Impulses and Motions of the animal Spirits in our Brains, which are the most immediate Instruments the Soul uses in her Operations; tho thus the first rise of evil Thoughts may be involuntary, yet if we with Pleasure entertain and cherish them, if our Fancies are tickled by them, if they are delightful and grateful to us, this implies the Consent of our Wills, and they then become greatly sinful in us.

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Tho we did not at first willingly conjure up these evil Spirits, yet if we like their Company, and bid them welcome, and provide lodging for them, that they may continue with us, this comes well-nigh to the same as if we had at first invited them in. Nay when such Enemies have invaded our Minds, if we do not presently raise all the Forces we can against them, put a sudden check and stop to them, labour with all our Power to quell and root them out, we are reasonably presumed to be of their Party, and to join with them. My meaning is plainly this, that tho evil Thoughts at first enter without our Leave and Consent, yet if afterwards we knowingly indulge them, nay if we do not streight on our Reflection upon them reject them with utter hatred and indignation, and by all means strive to divert our Thoughts to more innocent Objects, we then stand truly guilty of the Evil and Malice of them: which some have used to express thus; that *tho we cannot hinder the Birds from flying over our Heads, yet we may prevent their making of Nests in our Hair.*

The sum of all I have said is this: That evil Thoughts are no further sinful in us than they are voluntary, or than they

may be helped and avoided: whenever therefore we give manifest occasion to them by allowing our selves in such Practices as are apt to incite evil Thoughts, or when we do not before-hand duly watch against them; or when, if they do at any time arise in our Minds, we fail to stifle and crush them as soon, and as far as we are able, then they are reckoned to us as Sins, and are to be repented of as well as actual Transgressions.

II. Having thus briefly shewn you when we are in fault and to be blamed if our Thoughts be evil, I proceed now, secondly, to give some account of the Nature and Kinds of evil Thoughts. And here you must not expect that I should give you a particular Enumeration of the several sorts of them, for that would be an impossible thing; *Who can tell how oft he offendeth?* Who can declare all the several Thoughts that come into a Man's Mind but in one day or one hour, which yet he would blush to have made known to those he converses with? Our Thoughts are very quick and sudden, nimble and volatile, can wander in a moment to the utmost ends of the Earth, can leap streight from one Pole to the other, are as various

as the several Objects of our Senses, and the infinitely different ways whereby they may be disposed, united or blended together. And if we should be at a loss for external Objects to think of, the Mind can easily frame Objects to it self; and a thousand Frenzies and Extravagances, and mad Whimfies and giddy Conceits are the monstrous Issues of Mens Brains: I shall therefore only give some few Instances of Thoughts undoubtedly evil and sinful. Such are,

1. Which I shall insist most upon, the representing and acting over Sins in our Minds and Thoughts: when we erect a Stage in our Fancies, and on it with strange Complacency imagine those Satisfaction and Filthinesses which yet we dare not, which we have not opportunity to bring into outward Act, this is by some called *speculative Wickedness, the Dreams of Men awake*: when we gratify our covetous impure Desires and Lusts with the Pictures and feigned Representation of those Enjoyments and Pleasures and sensual Contentments we have a mind to. Now such kind of Thoughts may be considered with respect to the time present, past, or to come.

(1.) If we consider these lewd Imagi-

nations as to the present time, there is no Sin or Wickedness so vile and heinous but a Man may become truly guilty of it in the sight of God only by imagining it done in his Mind, and taking pleasure in such a Thought. Thus the revengeful Person who perhaps hath hardly Heart and Courage so much as to handle his Sword, or to look his Enemy in the face, yet in his Thoughts can fight him and subdue him, imagine him under his Power, lying at his mercy, and exercise all manner of Spite and Cruelty towards him, put him to extreme Pain and Misery, fancy him undone and ruin'd, and then rejoice in his own Mind, that he is thus even with him; and by this means may become guilty of the Sins of Murder and Revenge, tho he hath not done his Enemy the least mischief all this while.

Thus again, Modesty, Shame, fear of Discredit, or some other temporal Consideration may prevail with a Man so far, as that he shall never attempt a Woman's Chastity; but yet if in his Thoughts he fancies her present with him, and embraces that Image of her which is painted in his Mind with a fantastick Love; if the Devil of Lust be stirred up in him, and he enjoys the Cloud, the Creature of his

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own Brain, this is the Adultery of the Heart, our Mind then becomes a Stews, and is polluted and defiled; and tho the actual Sin be a sign of greater Impudence and more untamed Lust, yet this argues the same kind of Wickedness and Uncleaness. And this was the Doctrine of the *Philosophers* of old: *fecit quisque, quantum voluit*: every one may well be supposed to have done that which he wanted not Will or Mind to, but only opportunity of doing. So *Seneca*; *latro est etiam antequam manus inquinet*: He is a Thief that covets, tho he never rifles another Man's Goods, if in his Imagination only he possesses them; nay a Man may thus contract the Guilt of greater and more Sins, than ever he can possibly act. It is but a very little in reality that the most griping ravenous Oppressor can grasp to himself, or defraud other Men of; but in his Thoughts he may swallow Empires, and plunder whole Towns and Cities. Thus a Man, even whilst in this place, may stab another, tho in *Turkey*; he may ravish every beautiful Woman he sees, rob every Man he meets with, and in the twinkling of an Eye (like *Caligula*) murder whole Societies and Kingdoms.

For this I take for an undoubted Truth,

that they who allow themselves in evil Thoughts and Imaginations, who give way to their ambitious, covetous, or lustful Fancies, are not restrain'd by the Fear of God from the actual commission of those Sins they love to think of; it is some other by Consideration, some temporal respect that hinders them, not the sense of their Duty and Religion: and this I believe every one that faithfully examines his own Mind will yield, that if he could as freely, and as safely and secretly commit any Sin, as he can think of it with Pleasure and Delight, he should not stick, as often as he had any Inclination or Temptation thereto, to do all those things he thinks of with so much Joy. Could the angry revengeful Person, whose Mind boils and ferments with inward Spleen and Rage, by a Wish or Thought, with as little Danger, and as secure from all knowledg of other Men, or the least suspicion of being found out, kill or wound, or mischief his Enemy, as he can desire it in his Mind, do you believe he would spare any of his Adversaries? Could the greedy Wretch as secretly get the possession of his Neighbour's Goods, as he can covet them; could he actually cheat and over-reach, and it were no more
* possible

possible for him to be discover'd, than it is for Men to know his Thoughts, I doubt not but every such Person would soon actually invade and usurp all those things he now swallows in his Imagination or greedy Appetite only. But farther ;

(2.) As to what is past, there is reciting and repeating over those Sins in our Thoughts and Fancies, which we had long before committed, and perhaps, as to the external Acts, quite forsaken. When we revive our stolen unlawful Pleasures in our Memories, and run over in our Minds all the Passages and Circumstances of our Sins long since committed, with a new and fresh delight ; this is much the same as if we lived continually in them. As Men often think of their dead Friends, and represent to themselves their Features, their Conversations, and divert themselves with the Remembrance of that Pleasure they once enjoy'd in their good Discourse and Company, tho they have lain many years rotting in their Graves : or as good Men with mighty satisfaction reflect upon the Actions of a well-spent Life, recalling to their Minds with great Joy and Transport, what at any time they have well done ; after the same manner do wicked Men as it were raise again, by the Witch-

craft of their filthy Imaginations, their past Sins, renew their Acquaintance with them, and Approbation of them. When weak and impotent, disabled by Poverty, Age, want of Convenience or Opportunity for the repeated Commission of them, they possess the Sins of their Youth, and place them ever before them, chewing upon the Cud, recounting over to themselves their merry Bouts, their mad Pranks, their wanton Dalliances, their lewd Excesses, their wicked Company, with the same Contentment almost as they first acted or enjoy'd them. And thus their Souls sin still as much as ever, altho yet as to the outward Act they may be through Age, Poverty, want of Ability or Opportunity, chaste, temperate and sober. This is certain, we cannot be truly said to have forsaken or repented of those Sins, the remembrance of which is grateful to us. To think of our evil Ways with Grief and Shame, and to abhor them, is our Duty; but to relish them in our Thoughts is still to approve of them: it is a sure sign that we have not really disowned or renounced the Sin in our Judgments, tho we may have left it for some accidental Reason, and that we are still very good Friends with it, if we can al-

low our selves to think of it with Pleasure and Delight.

(3.) If we consider evil Thoughts with respect to the time to come. The speculative Wickedness of Mens Fancies and Imaginations shews it self in the wild and extravagant Suppositions they make to themselves, feigning themselves to be what they would fain be, and then imagining in their Minds what in such Circumstances they would do, how they would manage and demean themselves. God only knows how much Time Men fool away in such childish Conceits, of becoming, God knows when, great, and rich, and honourable; and how bravely they would then live, how they would please every Appetite and Humour, fulfil every Desire, have their Will in all things, and enjoy perfect Ease and Content. Now this is the work of a mean idle Fancy, when we thus frame to our selves imaginary Models of Happiness, creating Fools Paradises to our selves, building Castles in the Air, and then vainly strutting up and down, and sporting our selves in them. What Preferments and Advancements, what Success and prosperous Fortune do some Men, especially young Men that know but little in the World, promise to themselves?
what

what jolly Thoughts do such false Roman-tick Hopes often fill them with? how do they make their Spirits leap and caper within them, as if the Messenger were just now at the Door to bring them tidings of it? how do their Thoughts go out to meet that Pleasure and Happiness they so much desire? how do they please themselves with the Fancies of those Mountains of Gold, with those strange chimerical Ideas of Bliss which yet they are never like to be possessed of? like those good-fellows the Prophet *Isaiah* speaks of, *Isa. 56. 12. Come ye, say they, I will fetch Wine, and we will fill our selves with strong Drink, and to Morrow shall be as this Day, and much more abundant: they feed and live upon the Promises of their own Hearts and Thoughts before-hand; and, as one hath well expressed this Vanity, they take up before-hand in their thoughts upon trust the pleasures they hope to enjoy, as Spend-thrifts do their Rents, or Heirs their Revenues before they come of full Age to enjoy them.*

Very few Men are satisfied with their present Allotments, or like their present Fortune, and therefore they set their Imaginations on work to mend it; and please and gratifie themselves with these silly Im-
postures

postures of their teeming Fancies. “ Well,
 “ says the impatient Youth, when my Pa-
 “ rents are once dead and gone to Hea-
 “ ven, and my time of being subject to
 “ Masters, Tutors and Guardians shall
 “ be once hapily expired, and I shall be
 “ free from the Restraint of the grave and
 “ wise, how brisk and frolicksom shall I
 “ then be ? how merry will the Days be,
 “ how short the Nights, when I shall sin
 “ without fear of an angry Look, or a
 “ severe Check, please only my self, give
 “ no account to any ? Thus his Heart and
 Mind is debauched long before his Body is
 entred : and so the admirer of Honour and
 worldly Dignity cuts out for himself that
 Place at Court, or that Office which he af-
 fects most, and then settles himself in all
 the Magnificence and Pomp imaginable,
 fancying himself highly raised and exal-
 ted above other Men ; all his Neighbours
 and former Acquaintance crowding to at-
 tend and wait on his Pleasure, and all their
Sheaves bowing down to his Sheaf, as Joseph
dreamt, and the Sun, Moon and Stars ma-
king their humble Obeysance to him. These
 are the first sort of evil Thoughts, lewd or
 wicked, or trifling and useless Imaginati-
 ons. I shall but just mention some other,
 as,

2. Unworthy, Atheistical, prophane desperate Thoughts of God Almighty, *saying in our Hearts there is no God*, either secretly denying there is any, or too often wishing there were none: questioning his Power and Goodness, distrusting his Truth or Faithfulness. *How should God know? or is there Knowledge in the most high? can he judg through the dark Cloud?* bidding him depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of his Ways. *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what Profit should we have, if we pray to him? what can he do for us to recompense the trouble of his Service? what Advantage will it be to me, if I be cleansed from my Sin?* “ Here is a deal of doe and bustle
 “ made about Conscience and Religion, I
 “ will e’en venture my self as I see a thou-
 “ sand others do; I shall scape as well as
 “ the rest of my Company or Acquain-
 “ tance, and the like. God only knows how many of us suffer such vile Thoughts as these to lodg in our Breasts.

3. I might instance in our thinking and musing upon things innocent and harmless enough in themselves, which yet become evil because of the Seasons of them, that is, because we should then be thinking of better things; for it is certainly
 lawful

lawful to think of our Friends, Relations, temporal Concerns, but then it must be in due Time and Place: they must not juggle out all other Thoughts; nay we must wholly banish them our Minds when we come into God's more especial Presence; at our Prayers, or at receiving of the Sacrament, such Thoughts are by no means to be admitted. I speak not now of the sudden Excursions of our Thoughts, even when the Mind is about the most serious Employments, nor of the greater Unruliness of our Thoughts upon some particular Accidents or Occasions. I mean only our gross Heedlessness in suffering them to wander to the Ends of the Earth, whilst in Pretence and Shew we are engaged in worshipping that God, *who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and Truth.* What Man that now hears me would be content that all the several things not only that have suddenly come into his Mind, but which he hath voluntarily for a considerable time dwelt upon and entertained his Mind with during this short Exercise, should be here openly exposed to the whole Congregation? How many of us have been telling our Mony, or counting over our Bags, or selling or buying in our Shops, or at
our

our Games and Sports, or ordering our household Affairs, or conversing with distant Friends? into how many Countries have some of us travelled? how many Persons have we visited? how many several Affairs have we dispatched, to say no worse, since we first this day began Divine Service?

4. I might farther mention envious, malicious, fretting Thoughts, when our Spirits are disquieted and vexed at the Prosperity and Happiness of other Men, who get the start of us, and are preferred before us, because they have a greater Trade, or are better loved and more respected than our selves. Or

5. Troublesome anxious Thoughts of future Events, multiplying to our selves endless Fears and Solitudes, distracting our minds with useless unnecessary Cares for the things of this life, perplexing our selves about things that do not at all concern us, nor belong to us. How many who want nothing they can reasonably desire, render their lives strangely wretched and miserable, only by discontented and melancholy Thoughts, and ill-boding Apprehensions; their Souls continually shaking with the pannick dread of improbable Crosses and Misfortunes, creating to themselves great pain and confusion by
tragical

tragical and idle Jealousies of evils to come, and by vexing at what they cannot help or avoid. Or,

6. I might insist on haughty, proud, admiring Thoughts of our selves. How much time do many men spend in studying and considering their own Worth and Excellencies? How do they please themselves with viewing their own Endowments and Accomplishments, and imagine all others to have the same opinion of them they have of themselves; that every one is speaking of their praise, and that all that pass by them take notice of them, and ask who they are?

I might instance in carking and projecting Thoughts, plotting and contriving for Years and Ages to come, as *if our houses were to continue for ever, and our dwelling places to all generations.*

I might instance in thoughts of Presumption and Security; bidding our Souls take their ease, and satisfy themselves with those good things we have laid up for many years.

I have not time now to speak of vain, unprofitable, insignificant Thoughts, when, as we ordinarily say, we think of nothing, that is, not any thing we can give an account of; when our thoughts have no dependence

pendence nor coherence one upon the other, which I may call the Nonsense of our thoughts, they being like the conceits of Madmen, or like little Boys in a School, who, as long as the Master is with them, all regularly keep in their several places, every one minding his proper work, but as soon as his back is turned, are all straight out of their places in Disorder and Confusion; such are our Thoughts when we forget to watch over them, or command them: but this is an endless subject.

III. The only thing remaining is, to name to you some plain Practical Rules for the right government of our Thoughts.

I. The first Rule shall be grounded upon the words of my Text, *Out of the Heart proceed evil thoughts.* If they proceed from our hearts, then we must look especially after them: in the words therefore of Solomon, Prov. 4. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* Thus the Prophet Jeremiah 4. 14. *Wash thy heart from wickedness, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* and here our Saviour, *out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* Now by Heart in the Scripture Phrase is most ordinarily meant

meant the Affections, such as Love, Hope, Fear, Joy, Desire, and the like: so that the plain sense of this place is, that such as Mens Affections are, such as the Objects are upon which they are placed, and toward which they are most carried out, such will their Thoughts be: we shall certainly think most of those things that we love most, that we fear most, that we desire most. Do we not find it thus in all other instances? and were our Affections but duly set upon Divine and Heavenly Objects, we should as constantly and as pleasantly think of them, as the worldly or ambitious Man doth of his Honours and Riches. Were our Hearts but once thoroughly affected with a sense of God and Goodness, and the things of the other World, we should hardly find any room in our thoughts for meaner and inferiour Objects; such Divine and Spiritual Matters would fill our Souls, and wholly employ and take up our Minds. If we once really loved God above any present Enjoyment or temporal Concernment, it would be impossible that things sensible should exclude the thoughts of him out of our minds, or that we could pass any considerable time without some concurrence with him, and Addresse to him.

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him. Have we a business of such infinite moment depending upon those few hours that yet remain of our lives (how few God only knows) and have we time and leisure to spend whole days and weeks in unprofitable useless Fancies and Dreams, in the mean time forgetting the Danger we are in, and the only necessary Work we have to do?

Here then must the Foundation be laid, in setting our Affections upon things above; in frequent considering the Importance, the Necessity, the absolute Necessity of our Duty in order to our Happiness, till by degrees we come to a love and liking of Goodness and Religion, and then holy, pious, and devout thoughts will be easie, free, and almost natural to us. It is, I grant it, a vain thing to persuade you to look after your thoughts whilst your minds are estranged from God; but *a renewed mind, a new heart*, as the Scripture calls it, would produce new and other-ghes thoughts. As the fountain is, such will the streams be; *where the treasure is, there will the heart be also. An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit, nor can we gather figs from thorns, or grapes from thistles*; evil thoughts, lusts, foolish imaginations, are the natural genuine spawn of a wild dishonest

dishonest mind. *When I was a child, saith St. Paul, I thought as a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.* As it is impossible for a wise man, after that he is arrived to years of understanding, and his mind is furnished with the Knowledge of the best and worthiest things, to please himself with those silly Fancies and childish Imaginations, which were the Entertainment and Diversion of his younger, rarer years; so 'tis no less impossible for any one who is deeply touched with the things of God, and hath a due sense of those things which are more excellent, to endure such silly worldly extravagant thoughts as possessed his Soul, and pleased him in the days of his ignorance and folly. *How do I love thy Law?* saith David; *it is my meditation day and night.* This is the first Rule; Look after your Heart and Affections.

2. And more particularly; Consider what Care and Art wicked men use to prevent good thoughts, and let us use the same Diligence and Endeavours to hinder evil and wicked thoughts and motions. There is no man, especially that lives in any place where Religion is professed, and in any tolerable credit, that can go on in a course of Sin without some Regret and

Remorse; sometimes his Conscience will find a time to speak to him; the natural notions of a God and a future State will ever and anon be stirring, and are apt to disturb the Repose and Jollity of the most secure and hardned Sinner. Now to one resolutely wicked, such thoughts of a Judg, a future Account, and everlasting Punishments, cannot but be very uneasy and unwelcome; and therefore doth he strive all that he can to stifle such chilling thoughts in their very first rise, to silence or drown the whispers of his Conscience; he would fain even run away from himself, he chuses any Diversion, Entertainment or Company, rather than attend to the dictates of his own Mind and Reason; is afraid of nothing so much as being alone and unemployed, lest such ghastly and frightening Apprehensions should croud in upon him; he keeps himself therefore always in a hurry and heat, and by many other artifices endeavours to shut all such cool and sober thoughts out of his mind, till by often quenching the motions of God's good Spirit, and resisting the light and voice of his own Conscience, he by degrees loses all sense of good and evil, all good Principles are laid asleep within him, and he arrives at his wish'd-
for

for happy state of sinning without disturbance or interruption.

Now if we would but use equal Diligence and Watchfulness to prevent or expel evil Thoughts, we should find just the same effect, that in time our minds would become in a great measure free from their Solicitations and Importunity: would we but presently reject them with the greatest Disdain and Indignation, use all manner of means to fix our minds on more innocent and useful subjects, avoid all Occasions, or Provocations, or Incentives to evil Thoughts, as carefully as wicked men do reading a good Book, or keeping of good Company; we certainly should find in a short time our minds no longer pestered or troubled with them; we should begin to lose all Savour and Relish of those sins we formerly delighted in; by their being for some considerable time kept out of our minds, there would arise a strangeness between them and us, and they would become as uneasie to us as now they are pleasant and grateful.

3. Would you prevent evil Thoughts? Above all things avoid Idleness: the Spirits of men are busie and restless; something they must be doing, and what a number of monstrous, giddy, frothy, im-

probable Conceits do daily fill our brains, merely for want of better Employment? No better way therefore to prevent evil thoughts, than never to be at leisure for them. *I went by the field of the slothful, saith Solomon, and lo it was all grown over with thorns and nettles.* And therefore indeed those are most of all concerned in this Discourse about Thoughts, whom Providence hath placed in such a station, as that they are under no necessity of minding any particular Calling for the gaining of a Livelihood; for whom God hath provided a Subsistence without their own labouring and working for it; such as these are in manifest danger of consuming a great part of their time in idle and unprofitable, if not lewd and wicked Imaginations: having little else to do, the Devil, or their own vain Fancies will find work for them; and when Consideration and Argument alone are not able to drive out these wicked inward Companions, yet business will. And therefore I know nothing more advisable, than that we should be always stored with fit Materials and Subjects to exercise our thoughts upon, such as are worthy of a reasonable Creature, that is endued with an immortal Soul that is to live for ever. Those
who

who are most busy, yet have some little Spaces and Intervals of time in which they are not employed. Some mens Business is such, as tho it employs their Hands, and requires bodily Labour, yet doth not much take up their Thoughts, nor need their Minds be very intent upon it; now all such should constantly have in their Minds a Treasure of innocent or useful Subjects to think upon, that so they may never be at a loss how to employ their Minds: for many of our evil Thoughts are owing to this, that when our time hangs upon our hands, we are to seek what to think of. Let us therefore every one resolve thus with our selves: The first Opportunity of leisure I have, the first vacant Hour, I will set my self to consider of such or such a good Subject, and have this always in readiness to confront and oppose to any wicked or evil Thoughts that may sue for entrance or admission. For if we do thus, Temptations will always find our Minds full and prepossessed; and it is a hard case, if neither the visible nor invisible World, neither God's Works, nor Providences, nor Word can supply us with matter enough for our Thoughts, unless we feign extravagant Conceits, or repeat our old Sins in

our Minds, or tickle our selves with wild Suppositions of things that never were, nor are ever like to be.

Another Rule I would give is this, That we should live under the due Awe of God's continual Presence with us, and bear this always in our Minds, that the pure and holy God, the Judg of the World, before whose impartial Tribunal we must all shortly stand, is conscious to every secret Thought and Imagination that passes through our Minds, and that he knows them altogether; that *God is in us all*, Ephes. 4. 6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*; that he is present in the most inward corners and recesses of our Hearts, and knows every one of those things that come into our Minds. Now who of us is there but must confess, that if his Thoughts were all known and open to other Men, if his Parents, his Friends, his Neighbours, or Enemies could have certain cognizance of them, he should be infinitely more careful about them than he is, should not allow himself that Liberty and Freedom which he now takes; should be as watchful that his Thoughts should appear to other Men orderly, rational and virtuous, as he is now that his
Words

Words and Actions may be such? And while we profess to believe that the transcendent Majesty of Heaven and Earth is acquainted with all our private Conceits, is privy to all our Wishes, Desires and Purposes, observes and takes notice of all the motions of our Minds, and that at the last day he will bring every secret thing into Judgment; are we not ashamed of shewing in his sight such Folly, of committing such Wickedness in his Presence? Should we blush and be confounded to have but a mortal Man certainly know all the childish, vain, wanton, lustful thoughts that possess our Minds? and is it nothing to us that the great God of Heaven and Earth beholds and sees them all? Consider this then, O vain Man, who plearest thy self in thy own foolish Conceits, with thinking how finely thou dost cheat the World, by a mask of Religion and Godliness! Consider, I say, that there is not an evil Thought that ever thou takest any pleasure and delight in, not an evil Device or Imagination of thy Heart, but what is perfectly *naked and open to that God with whom we have to do*: That he is with thee in the silent and dark night, when no other eye seeth thee, when thou thinkest thy self safe from all discovery, and
that

that thou mayst then securely indulge thy own wicked Appetites and corrupt Inclinations; for *the Light and Darknes are both alike unto God, he compasseth thy Path and thy Bed, he is acquainted with all thy ways.* And the frequent Consideration of these things would certainly produce a mighty Awe in us, and a sutable Care not willingly to entertain or cherish any such thoughts as we should be ashamed to have known to all the World, nor ever to suffer any other thoughts to take place or remain in our Minds, than such as we should not blush to have written in our Foreheads.

5. For the right Government of your Thoughts, let me recommend to you above all things serious Devotion, especially humble and hearty Prayer to God Almighty. Man is compounded of two Natures, a rational and spiritual, and a bodily; by our Bodies we are join'd to the visible Corporeal World, by our Souls we are allied to the immaterial invisible World: now as by our outward Senses the intercourse and correspondence is maintained between us and the Corporeal World, so by our Devotions chiefly our acquaintance is begot and kept up with the Spiritual World. When we lay aside
all

all thoughts of this lower World, and the concerns of this Life, and apply our selves to the Father of Spirits, and make our humble Addresses to him, we then more especially converse with him as far as this State will admit of; and the more frequently and constantly we do this, the more we shall abstract our Minds from these inferior Objects which are so apt to entangle our Hearts, and take up all our Thoughts, and shall make the things of the other World become more familiar to us: for when we betake our selves seriously to our Prayers, we do then bid adieu to all that is visible and sublunary, and for that time endeavour to employ our Minds wholly on what relates to another Life; and therefore consequently the oftner we do this, and the more hearty and serious we are in it, the more our Minds will be used and accustomed to Divine Thoughts and pious Meditations, and weaned from present sensible Objects. Every devout Exercise conscientiously performed will season our Spirits, and leave a good tincture upon them, and dispose us for worthy and excellent Thoughts; it is like keeping of good Company, a Man is by degrees moulded and fashioned into some likeness unto them and : on the
other

other side, the Intermiſſion, Neglect or formal and perfunctory Performance of our Devotion, will ſoon breed in us a forgetfulneſs of God and heavenly things; as omitting to ſpeak of an abſent or dead Friend, or neglecting to call him to our mind, by degrees wears him quite out of our Thoughts and Memory. So that you ſee a due ſenſe of God upon our Minds, and of thoſe things that belong to our greateſt Interests, is by nothing ſo well maintain'd as by our conſtant Devotion; this is like ſeeing our Friends often, or converſing with them every day, it preſerves Acquaintance with them, it cheriſhes our Love and Kindneſs towards them. I end all with that excellent Collect of our Church.

Almighty God, unto whom all Hearts be open, all Deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; cleanſe the Thoughts of our Hearts by the inſpiration of thy holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name, through Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

(157)

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the
Anniversary Meeting
OF THE
GENTLEMEN

Educated at
St. Paul's SCHOOL.

The Sixth Sermon.

1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7.

*Charity suffereth long, and is kind ; Cha-
rity envieth not ; Charity vaunteth not
it self, is not puffed up, &c.*

THE chief and most laudable De-
sign of this and other the like An-
niversary Meetings being to pro-
mote Love, Kindness and Friendship a-
mongst

mongst Men, from the consideration of some particular Relations, by which (over and above what doth belong to us in common with all Men and Christians) we are more nearly united and linked one to the other; I thought I could not entertain you with any thing more proper to this Solemnity, than a Discourse upon these words, wherein I intend

- I. To describe unto you wherein this amicable friendly Temper and mutual Love, which we are to further amongst our selves this day, doth consist. And,
- II. To recommend it especially to *your* Care and Practice, who have had the advantage of a liberal and ingenious Education.

I. To shew you wherein true and undissembled Love doth consist, which I shall do only by paraphrasing or commenting as briefly as I can upon this most excellent description of Charity given us by St. Paul.

I. *Charity suffereth long*, is not hasty to return any Evil or Injury we may have received from others; it makes a Man patient, forgetful of Wrongs, and slow to demand

demand Satisfaction. He that is possessed with this excellent Grace of Charity will defer righting himself when injured, and seem for a great while as if he did not at all observe or take notice of those Affronts and Trespases, which the furious and wrathful would be sure streight to revenge. He doth not lie at catch, and presently take all Advantages against his Neighbour, and trouble him for any little Offence, and require strict Reparation for every petty Damage he may unjustly sustain: he doth not take all Forfeitures that the rigor of the Law would give him, or stand with his Debtors for a day, or streight break off Friendship for the first Unkindness; but he will for a long time bear with the Failures and Miscarriages of other Men, as all of us do easily overlook and readily forgive the Mistakes or Misdemeanours of those whom we entirely love: with great Patience he waiteth their Amendment, and silently tarries till of their own accord they make him Satisfaction, and is always willing to hearken to any fair terms of Accommodation, and to accept of the least Submission and Acknowledgment.

Contrary to all this is the temper of those whom the *Apostle* calls *Fierce*, and
Solomon,

Solomon, hasty of spirit; who, when once offended, breath forth nothing but utter Ruin and Slaughter, and are for the present destruction of all who stand in their way. Thus *David* in that great fit of Impatience, *1 Sam.* 25. when displeased at *Nabal's* surly Answer, resolved streight to murder him and all his Household; and so the Servant in the Parable of our Saviour, *St. Matthew* 18. who, tho his Lord had forgiven him a vast Debt of ten thousand Talents, yet after this, when he met with one of his fellow-Servants who owed him but a hundred Pence, laid violent hands on him, took him by the Throat; would not tarry one hour for his Mony; notwithstanding the poor Man humbly besought him to have patience with him but for a while, and promised him he would honestly pay him all.

But a truly charitable Man suffereth long, and forgiveth much, and dealeth with others as he hath experienced, and yet hopes God will deal with him; he giveth them time to recollect and bethink themselves, doth not soon despair of their growing better, but tries all the Arts and Methods of Patience and Kindness, and is unwilling to be brought to Extremities, or to do any thing that may seem harsh
or

or rigid; and in a word, had rather suffer a hundred than do one Evil.

Charity is kind, xpus's, Gentle and Courteous, easie to be treated with, is Gracious and Benign, and as far as may be, useful to all. Christian Charity doth sweeten mens Minds and Spirits; smoothes the Ruggedness and Unevenness of their Natures; makes them Tractable, Affable, and, as far as is consistent with their Innocency, Complaisant.

Contrary to which is that roughness and sourness of Disposition and Manners which is distastful to, and grates upon every one that falls in its way; as it was said of *Nabal* before mentioned, that he was *such a Son of Belial, that a man could not speak unto him*: Such were the *Pharisees* of old, Grave, Formal and Morose, Troublesom and Uneasie to all who conversed with them, Sullen and Froward. And too many such there are in the World, who pretend to great and high Attainments in Religion, and yet are of such techy and firy Dispositions, that there is no living quietly by them; nothing can please them, a Man is afraid of having any thing to do with them, they are of such waspish, quarrellsom, and churlish Natures.

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Whereas he in whom Christian Charity dwells, endeavours to oblige every one, and carries himself fairly towards all, so as to gain every man's good Word and Opinion; he is Calm and Mild, and friendly in his Deportment, receiveth every one that addresseth himself to him with Civility and Respect; his Demeanor is full of Compliance and Condescension, his Carriage and Behaviour Free, Candid and Ingenuous: and indeed there is no greater pleasure in the World than what is to be found in the Conversation of those in whom the true Christian Temper and Spirit rules and prevails.

No one complains of such a one; he is not grievous or offensive to any, and if he cannot do you all that Courtesie you desire, yet he so civilly denies you, that you are almost as much pleased as if he had granted your Request. *Charity is kind.*

3. *Charity envieth not;* the charitable Man grudgeth not at another's good, doth not mutter and repine because his Neighbour thrives better, hath a greater Trade, is of better Repute, hath got a larger Estate, or hath arrived to greater Dignity and Preferment than himself. Charity rather rejoiceth and pleaseth it self in other mens doing well; it addeth to a charitable

charitable Man's contentment to see other men satisfied, and doth really minister unto, and increase his own happiness to see the happiness of his Neighbours and Acquaintance. He findeth almost as much Delight and Complacency in their good fortune and success as they themselves do, thus making the Happiness of every man to become really and truly his own: it maketh him better to see other men in Health, and refresheth his Spirits to see others chearful and pleased. No real Benefit or Advantage happens to any round about him, but he comes in for his share, and largely partakes of it; and the pleasure of it becomes as truly his, as it is the Person's who is possessed of it.

Nay, as it hath been observed by some, here Love hath the advantage. I enjoy greater pleasure in my Neighbour's good Success and Prosperity than he himself can possibly do: for all the Contentment and Joy that his Prosperity ministers to him, I have pure and unmix'd, without bearing part in those Cares and Troubles with which it is usually attended.

Love makes us not apt to take Disgust and Pet, tho' God should bestow the good things of this Life more liberally upon some others than our selves; whereas

the Envious Man would not have God do any good turn for any Person without his Leave and Approbation. He would alone engross and monopolize all the Blessings of Heaven and Benefits of the Earth, or at least, if he could have his Will, none should partake of them but some private Friends of his, and those he hath a good Opinion of. He would have God mind no one else in the World, nor hear any other Prayers besides his own; nay he reckons himself ill dealt with, and mutinies against Heaven if any thing goes beside him, or any one enjoys something he is without. There is many a man in the World who thinks himself beyond all Expression miserable, for no other reason but only because another man is Happy; the good things his Neighbour enjoys eat up his Flesh, dry up his Marrow, and prey upon his Spirits, make his Eyes hollow, his Cheeks lean, his Face pale, and his Bones rotten. Hence it hath been observed that Envious men are the only Persons to whom, without form of Justice or breach of Charity, we may do harm; since to do them Hurt or Mischief we need only do good to their Neighbours. *Love envieth not.*

4. Charity *vaunteth not it self*, & *υπερβαται*. I shall not dispute the rigid meaning of the Original Word, but follow our Translation of it. Vaunteth not it self, is not Insolent and Domineering, and Arrogantly imposing upon others, as if we only were Wise and worthy to be Regarded; but it is modest and governable, willing to yield, and comply, and submit to the Judgment of others. This vaunting, foolish and giddy Elation of the Mind is the cause of manifold Quarrels and Disturbances in the World, when men malapertly take upon themselves to prescribe to others, and fondly expect that their singular Humour only should be observed, that their private Will and Fancy should stand for a Rule and Law to all others, and that all men should accommodate themselves to their idle Conceits, fond Prejudices, unreasonable Customs, or impertinent Opinions.

Charity *vaunteth not it self*, and as it follows, *is not puffed up*, which is of near signification, and therefore may be joined with the former. Haughtiness and Imperiousness of Mind, proceeding from a too great love and opinion of our selves, doth especially shew it self in Despising all others. Proud Persons are so full of them-

selves, so wrap'd up in the vain Contemplation of their own Perfections, that they slight and despise all the World; they look upon it as a Disparagement to learn from any, they cannot bear the least contradiction or opposition, they take upon themselves to judg and condemn all others, and will allow none to pretend to Wisdom or Understanding besides themselves. Any the least Disrespect or Oversight, any failure of due Observance and Submission straight begets a Quarrel; for they think themselves wronged, affronted, and unjustly dealt with, if every one does not value them just at the same rate they do themselves.

But now Love makes us humble and lowly minded, teacheth us to value those Accomplishments, to set a due Price and Estimate upon those Abilities others are endued with, and not to magnifie our selves, or to think of our selves more highly than we ought to think: and therefore in Scripture, where the virtue of Charity is commanded, Humility is very often joined with it; *Put on therefore bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind. Be ye kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love, in honour preferring one another, esteeming others better than your selves.*

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What we have a real Kindness for, is apt to appear to us in all Circumstances better than indeed it is; and were our Minds once thoroughly possessed with Charity towards others, we could not easily entertain any despicable and contemptible Thoughts of them, but upon all Occasions should bear a due Regard and Deference to them; and if this one effect of Charity did but get ground in the World, if men were Humble and Modest, diffident and distrustful of themselves, willing to learn, and receive Instructions from others more Learned and Wiser than themselves, we might hope soon to see an end of those Unchristian Feuds and Schisms which our Church is so miserably infested with. But so long as men lean so much to their own Understandings, and are swelled with such lofty Conceits of their own Abilities, that they think they need no Instruction; so long as they are so fond of their own private and singular Opinions, as that they not only resolve inflexibly to adhere to them themselves, but seek to impose them upon others, and fall out with all who are not of their Mind and Way, nay take upon them to pronounce every one Damned who is not as fond of their childish Conceits as them-

selves are; what can we expect but *strife and envying, contention, confusion, and every evil work?* Charity vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up.

5. *Charity doth not behave it self unseemly;* *ἐκ ἀχρημονῶν*, doth never use others rudely in Words or Gestures, especially not reproachfully: and thus it is fitly joined with what went before; Contumelious Behaviour being the natural effect of Pride and Arrogance. We care not how we demean our selves towards those whom we despise and set at nought, we can hardly vouchsafe such a good Look or a civil Word: but now Love giveth no abusive Language, never casteth Dirt in the face of any; it never endeavoureth to dishonour or disparage any ones Person, but is respectful to all however they differ from us; it can confute the Errors of those whom we oppose without any opprobrious or disgraceful Reflections, and answer their Arguments, and shew that they are in the Wrong without Reviling their Persons, or calling them Names. And it were well if this were regarded more than it is in our religious Debates and Controversies; if we would learn to differ from one another in our Judgments and matters of Opinion without virulent
Railing

Railing, and taunting Speeches, and unhandſom beſpattering and expoſing our Adverſaries ; which one thing, if it were conſcientiouſly obſerved, would go a great way towards the maintaining Peace amongſt us, notwithſtanding our different Sentiments and Apprehenſions. The ill Language which we give one another oftentimes doth ſet us at a greater diſtance, and more eſtrange our Minds from one another, than all our different Conceptions and Judgments. Railing againſt thoſe who diſſent from us, never yet made, nor is it likely ever to gain any one Convert or Proſelyte : Men are naturally inclined to ſuſpect that to be a bad Cauſe which needs ſuch baſe and unmanly Artiſices to uphold it ; and it is a ſhrewd ſign that we want ſubſtantial Reaſons and Arguments againſt any thing, when once we begin to ſcold and cry out with him in *Lucian*, ὦ κατὰργε, thou curſed damned Villain, it is not ſo or ſo ; but now Love is not rude or clamorous, but patiently and calmly hears both ſides, and ſoberly and coolly debates the Matter, and reaſons meekly about things ; it conſidereth more what it is that is ſpoken than who it is that ſpeaks ; it gives no needleſs Provocation, *it behaveth not it ſelf unſeemly.*

6. Charity

6. *Charity seeketh not her own.* A selfish, stingy and narrow Spirit, when we care for none but our selves, and regard not how it fares with other Men, so we do but live in ease and plenty our selves, is of all other things most contrary to that Charity which our Saviour both by his Doctrine and Example hath taught, and so earnestly recommended to us. Love is not Mercenary or Self-seeking, it inclineth us to do good to others, tho we thereby receive not the least advantage to our selves, besides the pleasure of doing it. If our Hearts be full of true Charity, it will never suffer us to be in quiet till we give it some vent, and will make us impatiently seek for Opportunities of exercising it; it will spend it self in laying out for others: so far is Love from projecting Gain or Profit to it self by that kindness it doth to others, that it is beneficent to the evil and unthankful, to the Indigent and those who are unable to make any requital; it teacheth us to lend, *not hoping to receive again*, nay to do Good to those who return Evil for it, so far is it from any base or selfish Designs. 1 Cor. 10. 24. *Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.* Christian Charity obligeth us to pursue the Benefit

nefit and Edification of others, tho it be with some loss to our selves, and teacheth us willingly to suffer some Detriment, rather than omit a fair occasion of doing a publick Good. We are not to *please our selves, but rather to please our Neighbour for his good*, Rom. 15. 1, 2. for this is the Mind which was in Christ Jesus, who denied himself, nay laid down his Life for the good of Mankind.

Christians are or ought to be so closely linked together by this bond of Charity, that every one should be as solicitous and concerned for the good of other men as he is for his own. I am sure the Love of the Primitive Christians was so remarkable, and raised such an Admiration even amongst their very Enemies and Persecutors, that it was a proverbial Speech amongst the Gentiles, *See how the Christians love one another*, what care do they take one of another? Had they been all Brethren according to the Flesh, they could not more heartily have contrived, nor more industriously advanced one anothers Interest and Welfare than they did. Was any one among them cast into Prison, all the Christians of that place presently flocked to him to visit and relieve him. Was any one visited with Sickness,

ness, all the best and greatest Personages did streight condescend to minister unto him in his weak Estate. Were any poor and in want, their Straits and Necessities were no sooner known than they were relieved. But what is now become of this brave and generous Spirit? when instead of doing good unto, we devour and bite one another. *Charity seeketh not her own.*

7. *Charity is not easily provoked*, ἡ παροξύνεται, which differs from what we had before, *it suffereth long*, in this, that the former especially respects Revenge, but this is the Passion of Anger; and tho we may sometimes upon just occasions be displeased and offended, yet Charity will teach us always to observe these two Rules.

(1.) This excellent Grace of Charity will give us so much power and command over our selves, as that we shall not be suddenly inflam'd upon every slight inadvertency, mistake or misfortune of our Brother; we shall not be easily angered upon every little and trivial occasion. A charitable Man is not nice and delicate, apt to pick Quarrels, to take Fire and fall out into Rage and Passion upon every cross Action or Miscarriage; he is easy in his Converse and Deportment; and it is no difficult

difficult matter for a Man to live with him without ever offending him. But alas! how weak and impotent are most of us in this case? How doth every little forgetfulness or negligence of a Servant, Inferiour or Neighbour, the breaking of a Glass, the loss of a trifle, discompose and ruffle our Minds, and raise such storms and tumults in our Breasts as require a great deal of time and trouble to lay and appease? We have but little kindness for those whom we cannot at all bear with: not only Charity but even common Humanity requires this at our hands, that we should mutually pass by and overlook such little indiscretions, overlooks, mistakes and inadvertencies, which we are all more or less subject unto, and cannot live without.

(2.) When we have great and just cause of Anger and Offence given us, yet Charity suffereth us not to fall into immoderate Passion, or to be transported by blind Rage and Fury beyond the bounds of Reason and Religion: it will secure us from all Paroxysms of Anger, for so the Greek word properly signifies: it will restrain that unruly and ungovernable Passion within its due bounds and measures, and keep it in some Temper and Mode-

Moderation, and not suffer it to betray us into any unreasonable and rash Actions, which end in Shame and a bitter Repentance. Our Anger, how just soever, should never make us hurt or injure the Person offending. It should never break out into Fury, which is the short madness of a Man; we should never be so far exasperated, as to suffer our Passion to hurry us into any Indecency or Excess.

It is certainly as lawful on some occasions to be angry, as it is to rejoice, grieve, pity, or exercise any other Affection of our Minds: there is no Passion implanted by God in Man, but what was designed by our wise Maker for some good End; and whilst in the exercise thereof it is directed to that end, and kept within its due Bounds and Limits, subject unto and regulated by Reason, the principal and imperial Faculty of our Souls, so far it is certainly harmless, nay useful.

In truth, all the Passions in themselves simply consider'd are neither good nor evil. Love, Hate, Hope, Fear, Joy, Sorrow, and the rest, as they are parts of our Nature, are things indifferent; but when they are fitly circumstantiated and ordered, they then become morally good, and are highly beneficial to us, and serve
many

many excellent Purposes: but when they are misplac'd or extravagant, when they command us, and are our Masters, they then become morally evil, and the most troublesome things in the World both to our selves and others. We must take great care therefore to curb and bridle this Passion of Anger, to keep it under government, and not suffer it to dethrone our Reason, or to hinder the free use of it, or to make us act any thing precipitantly, unadvisedly or foolishly. And this I think may be given as a certain Rule whereby we may judg when our Anger becomes sinful and vitious, and doth transgress the limits of Charity; namely, when it is raised to such a height, as that we have no perfect Command over selves, and cannot freely use or exercise our Reasons and Understandings; when we drive on headlong, and the Beast rides the Man; when we do we know not what, and repent of it after it is done; when our Passion is got into the Chair, and carries all before it; when our Blood boils, and our Spirits are in a great Fermentation, and we are so blinded with Fury and Rage that we know no difference between Friend or Fo, right or wrong, but are hurried on by the torrent

of an impetuous Passion to the commission of the greatest Outrages, to the most disorderly and unseemly Actions: this is surely contrary to Charity, which is *not easily provoked*.

8. *Charity thinketh no evil*; is apt and ready to put the best and fairest Interpretations upon all the Actions of other Men. Whatever Vices other Men are guilty of, Love, if possible, will find out Excuses, and plead their Pardon. It will be so far from aggravating those Injuries which our Neighbours may at any time have offer'd us, that it will set it self to find out some charitable Construction or other, and be ingenuous in devising Apologies for them. It will put us in mind of the good Offices they may sometimes have done us, reckon up the several Kindnesses we may have formerly received from them, and make use of that as an Argument to prevail with us more easily to pass by the wrong we now suffer. Love will be sure to alledg something or other in their Favor, sometimes their Age, sometimes their Ignorance, sometimes the Sicknes of their Body, sometimes that of their Mind; perhaps it was done by mistake, perhaps unawares, against the mind and will of him who did it. Whatever mischief or da-

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mage we have receiv'd, yet perhaps it was never intended or designed, and it was done rather by chance than out of any ill will: at least he was misinformed, he was in a great and violent Passion, and much out of humour when he did it, and perhaps now is heartily sorry for what he has done, and is just coming to ask us Forgiveness.

Love is not jealous or suspicious, doth not endeavour to blast Mens good Actions and Reputations by imagining and surprizing some secret Evil or bad Design in them, but makes a favourable Construction, and a fair and candid Interpretation of every thing, and always judgeth the best.

I know nothing more opposite to Charity than that detracting, censorious Humour which prevails so much in the World: when Men rashly censure and condemn their Neighbours without any just or probable Grounds, and by vain Surmises and ill-favoured Constructions lessen the Good they do, and aggravate the Evil; as thus, "Such a one is a very
" liberal and charitable Man, and it must
" be acknowledged that he doth a great
" deal of good in the place where he lives;
" but I wish he be not vain-glorious in

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" all

all this: I am much afraid he doth it only to be seen of Men. Another is indeed very serious and devout in the Church, but I doubt whether he be as honest at home. I can find no fault with such a Neighbour, he is wholly blameless as to his outward Conversation, a good moral Man; but I do not question but he hath some private haunts, he is only a little more cunning and close than the rest of his Neighbours. Thus do many Men, who it may be are conscious to themselves that they have no true solid Worth on which to bottom a Reputation, seek to raise it on the ruin of other Mens. Such as are bad themselves are apt to think all others so too, and to suspect that every one is a Hypocrite and Dissembler, who pretends to more Honesty or Religion than themselves. They cannot imagine that others, whatever outward shew they may make, can really abstain from those Pleasures and Gratifications which they are so strongly inclin'd to, and in which they find so much favour and relish. But Love takes every thing by the best handle, and never judgeth nor suspecteth any Man to be worse than his visible Actions do declare him. *Love thinketh no evil.*

9. *Charity rejoyceth not in Iniquity, but in the Truth.* A charitable Man is so far from rejoycing when others do amiss, that he is passionately affected with sorrow for it. He is mov'd to as much Pity and Compassion, and feels as sensible a grief for the Sins and Follies of those among whom he dwells, as he doth for any temporal Afflictions or bodily Calamities that do at any time befall them. He longeth for the Salvation of all Men, and nothing can trouble him more than to see Men needlessly and foolishly destroying and undoing themselves, when by the Religion they profess, they enjoy so many and such fair opportunities of making themselves for ever happy. But he *rejoyceth in the Truth.* Nothing pleaseth him so much as to see Goodness and Truth prevail and enlarge their Dominions, and become prosperous and triumphant in the World. He joineth with the heavenly Host at the Conversion of every Sinner in their Hymns, and Praises, and Allelujahs, and heartily blesteth the Divine Goodness for those Graces and excellent Dispositions and Qualities he finds others indued with.

How far then are they from Charity to whom it is Meat and Drink to hear a bad story of their Neighbour? who watch

for mens Halting, make sport with their sins, and take great pleasure and delight in publishing the guilt and shame of Others; who gad from House to House, and run into all Companies on no other Errand but to proclaim and divulge such Failings and Imperfections as they know their Neighbours are guilty of; who curiously pry into mens Actions on purpose to spy out some Faults, and then severely comment and criticise upon them; and wherever they come, make them the subject of their impertinent and unfavoury Prattle. But the Apostle farther adds,

10. *Charity beareth all things.* The words in the Original are πάντα σιγῇ, which are here badly rendred. It should be, as almost all Interpreters do agree, covereth and concealeth all things. Charity chuseth rather to hide and cast a Veil over the Sins and Faults of others, than to trumpet and proclaim them. A Charitable man is not wanting in his Duty to warn and rebuke those whom he knows guilty of any notorious Sins, but then he doth it secretly and in private: before others he chuses rather to take notice of what is good and commendable in men, than of what is faulty: he never speaks ill of any Man behind his back, but rather
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ther if possible finds something or other to commend him for. There is hardly any Man so wicked, so much enslaved to Baseness and Villany, but he hath some good Quality or other, and this Charity will be sure to lay hold on, and improve to his Advantage: not that we are bound to commend any one falsely, or may not speak the truth of a Person, when it is for his own or other mens Advantage that it should be discovered; but Charity obligeth us to give a favourable Character of others, and to represent them, as much as may be, to Advantage; and to take all Opportunities to commend them, rather than needlessly to vilify and disparage them, and speak all the Evil we know of them.

There are many who are always complaining of the looseness and profaneness of the Age, of the Sins and Debaucheries of the times they live in; and under this pretence they grievously slander, backbite and calumniate their Neighbors, and take all occasions to rip up and lay open their Faults, and with great study and artifice publish their Disgraces: and this they do with great Demureness and turn'd-up Eyes, as if they were mightily concerned for the Honour of God and

Religion, and were heartily troubled and grieved to hear or report such shameful and scandalous Things: and thus when they have vented a most cursed malicious Lye, with the Woman in the *Proverbs*, they wipe their Mouths, and say they have done no wickedness, and would have you impute it wholly to their Zeal, and not to their Malice. This I cannot better represent unto you than by translating the words of an Antient Father, who thus describes some in his days.

[There are, saith he, who shall endeavour to shadow and disguise the Malice and Ill-will they have conceived against any sort of Persons or Company of Men, with the false colour of Zeal for the Glory of God, and sorrow for the wickedness of the times; and then looking very sadly, and premising a deep Sigh, with a dejected Countenance and doleful Voice, they vent their Lyes and Slanders: and therefore, saith he, they do all this, that they may the more easily persuade those who hear them of the truth of what they relate; that the Story may be the sooner believed, and more readily swallowed, as seeming to be uttered with an unwilling Mind, and rather with the Affection of one that condoles, than any fetch of Malice.

Malice. I am grievously sorry for it, saith one, for I love the Man well, he is one of Excellent Parts, and hath many things very Laudable in him; but—and then he aggravates this particular Sin (whether truly or falsely imputed to him it matters not) to the highest degree. Another tells you, I knew so much of him before, but it should never have gone farther for me; but now seeing the matter is out (tho perhaps he was the first broacher of it) he shakes his Head and lifts up his Eyes, and tells you indeed it is too true; he speaks it with grief of Heart, and then tells it in every Company he comes in; but adds, it is great pity, he otherwise excels in many things, but in this he cannot be excused.] Thus far my Author.

There is, saith Solomon, Prov. 12. 18. that speaketh like the piercings of a Sword: And Prov. 18. 8. *The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly: Curse the whisperer and double tongued, for such have destroyed many that were at Peace, saith the Son of Syrach.* This if any thing is point blank contrary to Charity, for *Love covereth all Sins: Prov. 10. 12. Charity hideth all things.*

11. Yet farther, *Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things.* It maketh us to believe all the good of others we have the least probable ground for, and to hope that which we have no reason to believe. We very easily believe those things to be which we before-hand wish were true; and therefore Charity being a wishing well to all Men, must needs incline us to believe well also of them: this daily experience tells us, that where we love, there we are very unapt to discern Faults, tho never so plain and obvious to the impartial and disinterested; witness the strange Blindness men generally have towards their own, tho never so gross and foolish. The Judgment of Charity is very large and comprehensive, it takes in all, and believes well of every one who continues within the Pale of the Christian Church; doth never presume to judge mens Hearts, and pry into their secret Intentions.

Nay, where there is some reason to doubt of a man's truth and sincerity, yet Charity *hopeth* the best. It despairs of no man's Repentance and Salvation, but entertains some hopes that even the worst of men, the most refractory and disobedient will at length amend and grow wiser.

ser. Whoever sins, Charity hopes it is out of Weakness, or Surprise, or Inadvertency, and not out of wilfulness or habitual Custom: whoever mistakes Charity, hopes the Error proceeds from Ignorance only, or unavoidable Prejudice, or unhappy Education, and not from a bad and wicked Mind, or from any worldly sensual Interest. And in this particular is the Charity of our Church much to be commended, who contents her self with propounding an undoubted safe way to Heaven, without passing any reprobating Sentences and Anathema's on all other Churches and Societies of Professors, and excluding them from all hope of Mercy or possibility of Salvation. And indeed it concerneth us all to take great care rightly to discharge this Office of Charity, since according as we judg others, so shall we our selves be judged; it is our Interest as well as our Duty to be very Mild and Merciful in our Censures of others, and to judg of them with Favour and Allowance, since *with what measure we measure unto others, it shall be measured unto us again.*

12. Lastly, *Charity endureth all things*; never will be wearied or tired out; is not fickle and wavering; thinks nothing too much

much to Do, nothing too great to Undertake, nothing too hard to Undergo for the good of others. Love sticks not at any think, nay makes any Duty or Labour easie and pleasant; as *Jacob* after his disappointment grudged not to serve the other seven years for the sake of *Rachel*. *Love is strong as death, many waters cannot quench it, nor the floods drown it*; nothing can allay the heat of its Endeavours, or stop its Progress; it easily surmounts all Difficulties, and triumphs over all Opposition: tho we meet with great Ingratitude, Contradiction and unworthy Returns from those whom we have obliged, yet Love is not apt to repent of the Good it hath done, but still perseveres, endeavouring to overcome evil with good, unkindnesses with courtesies. Love doth not invent excuses, or seek delays when a fair occasion of exercising it self is offered; it makes us willing for some time to leave our own business, tho of near concernment to us, to expose our selves to heat and cold, to wearisome and painful Journies, to deny our selves our own ease and pleasure, and profit in some measure, rather than to forfeit an opportunity of shewing a great kindness. *Charity endureth all things.*

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This now is that affection of Love which we ought to bear one towards another: this is that kind, benign and gracious Temper, which manifests us to be the Children of God, and to partake of his Nature, and to be like unto him who *is good and doth good*, which shews us to be the followers of our Saviour in deed and in truth, *who went about doing good*, and which alone can fit us for that Kingdom wherein true Love, undisturbed Peace, and universal Charity dwells and reigns for evermore.

To convince you of the necessity of this frame and temper of Spirit, let me only put you in mind of what St. Paul saith in the beginning of this Chapter, that tho a Man should be able *to speak with the tongues of Men and Angels*, had the gift of all Languages, and could discourse with the greatest Eloquence and Efficacy, yet without this Charity he would be but as *sounding brass, or a tinkling Cymbal*. Tho a Man had the *gift of Prophecy*, and could foretel Things to come, were inspired from Above, and were able to convert others to the Faith, and propagate the Christian Religion in the World; tho he could *understand all Mysteries*, expound all Scripture, and give an account of the most difficult and sublime Truths, and
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had *all Knowledge and all Faith*, nay, the highest degree of that Faith by which Miracles are wrought, so that he could *remove mountains*, yet without this Affection of sincere Love he would be nothing worth; nay, tho a Man should part with his whole Estate, and *bestow all his Goods to feed the Poor*, tho he should exercise the highest Acts of Bounty and Liberality; nay, lastly, tho he should *give his Body to be burned* for his Religion, and die a Martyr for the Faith of Jesus Christ, yet if he hath not Charity, if he cannot patiently bear and pardon Injuries and Affronts, if he delights not to do good, and rejoiceth not in the Hapiness of other Men; if he be Envious, and Malicious, and Implacable, of a narrow contracted Spirit, it profiteth him nothing.

II. I only beg your Patience whilst in a very few words I recommend this *more excellent way*, as St. Paul calls it, this Spirit of Love to you especially who have enjoyed the advantages of a Liberal and Ingenuous Education. And if ever I could hope to prevail and persuade, I should certainly expect no little success in such an Assembly as this, consisting of Persons well taught and bred, whose Na-
tures

tures have been refin'd and polish'd, and Minds improv'd and cultivated, and new-moulded and fashioned by the Care and Skill of those excellent Persons to whose charge we were committed.

I think it ought not over-slightly to be taken notice of, that in such an Age as this, there are yet so many Persons of Fashion and Quality who are not ashamed to own their Education, and therefore may be reasonably thought yet sensible of the benefits that may have accrued to them from it: I say, in such an Age as this, wherein the first thing almost that Gentlemen affect, after they have once got free from under the Discipline of others, is presently to forget all they have learned, and to erase out of their Minds all the sober Counsels and useful Rules they had before receiv'd, huffing at all Instruction as a piece of Pedantry, fit only for Children in Coats, or Fools, and freely revenging themselves on their School-masters and Tutors, for attempting to make them wise and good against their Wills.

But notwithstanding this, I must say that by our thus meeting together we do but little credit either to our selves or the School where we were brought up, or
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the Persons under whose feet we late, unless we also clearly discover to the World in our Temper and Conversation something excellent and singular, that may distinguish us from the rude untutored Vulgar, the ignorant and illiterate Rout.

Were that only good breeding which is now most fashionable, and doth in ordinary account pass among us for such, I should very freely acknowledg it a Blessing not much to be valued or regarded. To move ones Leg and Body gracefully and in time; to bow and cringe in Mood and Figure; to wear Clothes most exactly made according to the newest Mode; to be able to speak of the *French* Court, and to repeat the witty part of a Play, and to talk finely of Love and Honour, and make smart Repartees; and to give every one good words without meaning any thing at all by them; to know how to embroider a Discourse with many Oaths and a little Atheism; to be able to drink high, and hector loudly; to abuse a Parson, and to dare to kill a Man; these and such others, not worth naming, are too often now a-days reputed the only genteel Accomplishments of a well-bred Person.

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But these are not the things we learnt at *St. Paul's School*, nor is this the Education which we now assemble in God's House to bless his Name for. Those are truly well bred, not only whose Understandings and discerning Faculties are improved and enlarged, but especially whose natural rudeness and stubbornness is broken, and wild and unruly Passions tamed; whose Affections and Desires are made governable and orderly; who are become manageable and flexible, calm and tractable, willing to endure Restraints, and to live according to the best Rules. By good Education we are, as it were, made over again, the roughness of our natural Tempers is filed off, and all their Defects supplied; and by prudent Discipline, good Example, and wise Counsel, our Manners are so formed, that by the benefit of a happy Education we come almost as much to excel other Men, as they do the brute Beasts that have no understanding.

How much therefore we are obliged to our School, we can no better way shew than by our civil and comely Demeanor, by our compliant and inoffensive Conversation, by our courteous and affable, sweet and benign Disposition, by our
kind,

kind, useful and sociable Behaviour in the World.

If we consult the sober Judgments of all Men, we shall soon find that there is nothing renders a Man more respected, his Company more pleasant and delightful and desirable, nothing procures greater Credit and Reputation, and sooner obtains the good word of every one, than a free, ingenuous, candid and condescending Temper, that studies to oblige, and rejoices to do good; that there is nothing more noble and generous than a universal Love and Good-will to all Men; nothing more amiable than Mildness, Peaceableness and Gentleness of Spirit; nothing more graceful and genteel than Kindness and Benignity; nothing more honourable and manly than being useful and beneficial to all round about us.

And these are indeed Qualities and Perfections hardly attainable (as a wise Man expresses it) by those *who hold the Plough, and glory in the Goad; who drive Oxen, and are occupied in their Labours; and whose talk is of their Bullocks; who give their mind to make furrows, and are diligent to give the Kine fodder.* These are above the reach of the *Smith who sitteth by the Anvil;*

Anvil, and considereth the Iron-work; the vapor of the Fire wasteth his Flesh, and he fighteth with the heat of the Furnace: the noise of the Hammer and the Anvil is ever in his Ears, and his Eyes look still upon the pattern of the thing he maketh. Vulgar and undisciplin'd Minds are not capable of such noble Principles, and worthy Inclinations.

If we indulge our furious and intemperate Appetites, and blind and impotent Passions; if we are apt to pick Quarrels, and delight in Feuds and Broils; if we allow our selves to rail and give ill Language; if we are rude and saucy in our Behaviour towards others, or practise any of the mean Arts and Methods of Detraction: we basely unman and degrade our selves, and offer an Affront to that liberal Education which hath been bestowed upon us, and equal our selves to the vulgar Rout. For where are such Qualities as these to be found but among Clowns and Beggars, among the savage and unbred? Such Accomplishments as these besit only Hostlers and Porters: they are most highly distasteful to all Company, and productive of Aversion and Disrespect. In a word, if you would excel others in point of true Worth

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and Excellency, endeavour to get your Souls possessed with this Divine Grace of Charity, which is the only thing that doth truly ennoble a Man, that doth exalt and dignify his Nature, and raise him above the rest of his fellow Creatures.

(195)

A

SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

The Seventh Sermon.

Numb. xxiii. 10.

----*Let me die the death of the righteous,
and let my last end be like his.*

I Shall not now trouble you with en-
quiring into the strict meaning of
these words, as utter'd by the Pro-
phet *Balaam* ; but I shall consider them
only as they are commonly understood,
viz. as containing in them the secret Wish
and Desire of most wicked and ungodly
Men ; who, tho they are loth to be at
the pains of *living* the *Life*, yet would

fain die the *Death* of the *Righteous*, and would gladly that *their latter end* should be like *his*. As well as Men love their Sins, yet they would not willingly be damned for them. They can't endure to think seriously of passing out of this World in an impenitent State. For it is what but a very few can arrive unto, wholly to shake off, or wear out all sense of Good and Evil, of Reward and Punishment. The fears of another World will ever and anon be stirring and crowding themselves in, and will fret and gall the Sinner sorely, and make his Thoughts troublesome to him. An uneasy Bed, a broken Sleep, a sudden Affliction, an *hand-writing on the Wall*, will sometimes force us, whether we will or no, to smite upon our Breasts, and reflect sadly upon our past dishonourable Misdeeds, and the fatal issue of them; and very often our own Conscience will fly in our Face, notwithstanding all our arts to divert it, or our charms to lull it asleep: nor could a wicked Man ever be at quiet in his Mind, but that he is resolved by God's Grace, when time shall serve, to do something or other, he doth not well know what or when, whereby he may obtain Pardon for all the Follies and Miscarriages of his Life past.

I am very confident I now represent to you the secret Mind of most wicked Christians, who at any time think seriously, *viz.* that that which makes them so hardy and stupidly neglectful of their immortal Concerns, and so jocund and pleasant whilst they live in plain known Sins, is this, that they promise themselves, and depend on God's Goodness for time and opportunity of making amends in a lingering Sickness, or in a declining Age. They are now young and healthful, strong and lusty; their Pulse beats evenly, their Blood moves briskly, their Spirits are active and subtil, and they feel no symptoms of any approaching Sickness. Hereafter therefore they think it will be time enough to look after another Life, when they shall be nigh leaving this, when their Bodies shall begin to decline, and their Strength to decay, and Death shall make its approaches.

Thus there are as it were two ways propounded to Heaven; one (and that is counted a very dull, tedious and difficult Passage) by the constant doing of good, by *living righteously, and godly, and soberly in this present World.* The other (which is a shorter cut, and a much broader Way) by repenting at our Death

of a wicked Life: and it is not at all hard to guess which way the greatest part of Men will choose.

And would this do, it were indeed a very fine and subtile Management of things: for thus we might swallow the Bait, and never be hurt by the Hook; we might have both the pleasure of being wicked, and the hopes of being saved; we might spare our selves all the trouble of Religion, and yet not miss of the reward of it; we might spend all our days as we list, gratify every vain Humor and Appetite, enjoy this World as much as we can, deny our selves nothing that our Lusts and Passions crave, live all our Life long without God in the World, and yet at last die in the Lord.

The great Enemy of Mankind hath not in all his Magazine a more deadly Engine for the destruction of Souls. Nor is there any thing I know of, that doth so notoriously frustrate and defeat the whole design of our Saviour's coming into the World, and render our Christianity so useless to us, as this one Presumption, that the whole of Religion, or all that is necessary to Salvation, may be perform'd upon a sick or death-bed. For if it may be done as well at the last, in good truth

what need we trouble our selves about it sooner? What need we disquiet our selves in vain about the exercises of Virtue and Piety, or forgo the sweet Pleasures of this Life, or constantly maintain a painful and ungrateful Conflict with the Inclinations and inordinate cravings of our Flesh, or renounce our secular Interests, or undertake a sharp and troublesom Service, whenas it is but at any time lamenting over our Sins, and trusting to the Performances of *Jesus Christ*, and we shall be as secure of Paradise, as if we had all our days kept a *Conscience void of Offence both towards God, and towards all Men*? and in so doing shall run no other hazard but that of dying suddenly, which doth not happen to one Man in five hundred.

Eternal Bliss and Happiness is a thing of so very great and weighty Consideration, of such vast moment to us, that to put off the thoughts thereof, or provision for it, but one day (after that we are become capable of thinking and acting like Men) is certainly a very great and unaccountable Indiscretion: but for a Man to give all his days to himself, and to his own pleasure and humor, and to reserve for God, for whose Service he was born, but

one, and that the worst and the last; this is surely madness beyond all measure.

The extreme folly and danger of such Practices I shall now endeavour to evince, by shewing briefly these three things.

I. How little all that amounts to which can be done by a wicked Man in order to the obtaining the pardon of his Sins on a sick or death-bed.

II. How far short all this comes of what the holy Scriptures require as the indispensable Condition of Salvation.

III. What small hopes or encouragement God hath any where given Men to believe, that he will at all abate or remit of those Conditions he hath propounded in the Gospel, or accept of any thing less than a good Life.

I. How little all that amounts to which can be done by a wicked Man on his sick or death-bed. Now some at this time can do more, some less, according as God affords them Space and Ability; but ordinarily the whole of a death-bed Repentance is no more than a few good Words and Wishes, a superficial Confession of Sin and Wickedness in general, some broken

ken Prayers and pious Expressions to the Minister, (who then shall be sure to be sent for in all haste, however despised by the Sinner all his life-time before) and perhaps receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, (which he never thought of, nor ever would trouble himself about whilst he was well and in health) together with a Legacy of his ill-gotten Goods to charitable Uses: and this in common Esteem is making a good Christian End; and such a one's Condition, whatever his Life hath been, is thought fair and hopeful.

But I am willing in the handling of this Subject to allow to the dying Penitent all the Advantages imaginable, and to consider his Repentance in the best Circumstances; and therefore I shall not instance in such as are violently snatch'd and suddenly hurried out of the World in the midst of their wickedness, and have hardly time so much as to beg Mercy at God's Hands; nor yet in those who are taken with such Diseases as render them incapable of any wise or rational Thoughts, tho this is a Case that often happens in the World: for there is many a Man who intends when he comes to die to repent, that is, to call to mind all his wicked

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ed ways, and to be extremely sorrowful for them, and at last it proves that his Sickness is of that sort as utterly to take away all his Memory and Understanding; and when he is to look back, and seriously to consider how he has lived, alas! he remembers not one thing good or bad that he ever said or did. He has pitched upon and fixed a time wherein to fit himself for another World, and for his long Home; and when that time is come, his Distemper proves such, that he knows nothing of his going, or that he is now upon his Journey. And as he lived like a Fool all his life long, so now when he designed to die very piously and wisely, perhaps he dies raving mad. But I shall omit these and the like Considerations, (tho indeed all those who are so daring and intolerably venturesom as absolutely to resolve to continue in all Ungodliness till they come to die, ought reasonably to expect that God should in his Justice cut them off without allowing them either the Opportunity or Means of Repentance) and instead thereof shall rather put the case of one who dies leisurely and by degrees, who retains his Memory and Understanding to the last, and is able in some measure to reckon up and re-
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count all his former Wickednesses ; and I shall consider what such a one can do towards the securing his everlasting Salvation.

I. He may be most passionately sorrowful for what he hath done amiss, so that the Remembrance of his evil ways may become very bitter and grievous to him, but yet it is hard to think for all this that his Mind should on a sudden be really altered ; for I speak now of such as have all along pleased and delighted themselves in Sin and Vanity, who have fortified themselves with all the Arguments for Vice and Irreligion, who have cherished the most contemptible Thoughts of, and hated nothing so much as Piety and Virtue : now is it likely that of a sudden such Mens Judgments and Opinions concerning the Worth, Value and Goodness of things should be so wonderfully changed, that they should be able so immediately to lay aside all their former Prejudices against the Rules of Goodness and Righteousness, and to be reconciled in a moment to what they have so long declared open Enmity against ? that just a little before they die they should become as absolutely of another Mind, and as clearly of another Persuasion,

sion, as if they were in truth other Men? It argues greater command over our selves than we should now find, should we try the same thing, for a Man to think, believe, judg and act quite contrary to what he hath thought, believed and done for forty, or fifty, or sixty years: so that in truth this Grief and Sorrow that now possesse the dying Penitent, is no other than that of every common Malefactor, who when he is ready to receive that Punishment which he hath deserved, is then veay angry and displeased with himself for what he hath done, and yet were he set free, would not stick, the next fair Opportunity, to commit the same Crime again that he is now condemned for; he is sorry not that he sinned, but that he cannot escape suffering for it; it troubleth him not so much that he hath been so evil, as that he fears God will prove just and true to his word; it wounds him to the Heart to think that he can now sin no longer, that all the Pleasure of it is past, and that nothing now remains but a sad Reckoning and Account; but yet he could still applaud himself in the remembrance of his former Extravagancies, were he sure that God would forget them: so that it is no thanks to wicked Men, tho they

they are mightily confounded at the sense of their Guilt when they come to die, and see Hell gaping before them just ready to devour them; those Fears and Horrors, that they at such times feel, are very often but some flashes of those Flames that are just ready to catch hold of them; and if such a Sorrow be Repentance, they shall then sadly repent to all Eternity.

2. If the dying Penitent proceeds still farther, most earnestly and affectionately to beg God's Pardon for the sake of *Christ Jesus*, pleading his Merits and Satisfaction; *what do they but mock God*, (to use the Words of a great Scholar and Courtier) *who think it enough to ask him forgiveness with the remainder and last drawing of a malicious Breath?* for what do they otherwise, that die this kind of well dying, but say unto God, *We beseech thee O Lord, that all the falshood, forswearing and treacheries of our life past may be pleasing to thee, and acceptable in thy sight, that thou wilt for our sakes (who have had no leisure to do any thing for thine) change thy Nature, and forget to be a Just God; that thou wouldst love Injuries and Oppressions, call Ambition Wisdom, and Charity Foolishness?* Certainly (as he concludes) *they who depend upon such Prayers, have either*
found

found out a new God, or made one. Nay,

3. Should he back his Prayers with Restitution of all that he hath gotten unjustly, and with Charity to the Poor, and Forgiveness of all the Injuries he hath received from other Men ; these indeed had been excellent Beginnings of a new Life, had they been done in time, but what Virtue or Praise can there be in restoring that which we cannot possibly detain any longer ? in giving away that which we must necessarily part with ? And as for pardoning Injuries received, alas ! what is all this when we speak of wicked and unreasonable Men, who in their Lifetime take present Pay, immediate Revenge ? Such People talk of forgiving Injuries, whenas there is not one Injury done to them that they have not a great while ago fully returned, there is nothing behind-hand or due to them, in that kind ; they have had the Spite and all the Pleasure of Revenge already, and now after that they would freely forgive and die in Charity.

4. Lastly, The utmost and greatest thing that the sick or dying Sinner can do is to make strong, and, as to his present meaning, most sincere Resolutions against his former evil Courses, and for walking
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in all Virtue and Godliness, should God continue his Life; and this is that which Men usually trust unto in this Extremity, they hope God will accept of the Will for the Deed, and that such unfeigned Resolutions shall pass for Repentance.

Now here I would desire you seriously to consider, that there is nothing in the World more easie than to resolve well, especially when we are under any Fear or Fright; that there is not any thing, however difficult or ungrateful, or even impossible, that Men will not readily promise to perform if thereby they may but deliver themselves from a pressing and imminent Danger: for our Minds being then wholly prepossessed with the great sense of the Danger we are in, we weigh not at all the Difficulties or Inconveniences of what at such a time we undertake or engage our selves to do. But yet how hard do we by daily Experience find it to keep close and constant to those Religious Resolutions which we make even in the time of our Health and Vigor, and that upon the most serious deliberation? And how many have we known in the World, who when they lay on their sick Beds, and were under the Fears and Apprehensions of Death, have by the most solemn

solemn Vows, and those no doubt, as to the present sense of their Minds, sincere, obliged themselves to walk in better ways, and professed that they desired to live for no other end but only to testify the reality of their Intentions by their future Obedience; who yet as soon as ever they have been restored to health, have presently returned like the dog to the vomit, or the sow to the wallowing in the mire? Then is the time of making good and lasting Resolutions of living well, when we can examine indifferently, and determine impartially, when our Judgments are good, and our Passions are quiet. But all the Purposes of sick Men are most commonly like the Vows of a Mariner in a great Tempest, which vanish away and are forgotten upon the clearing of the Sky and altering of the Weather; their Mind changes with their Blood, and varies with their Pulse, and all their good Purposes are purged away with the Dregs of their Distemper. And thus it is easie to observe that the ungodly Man's Resolutions are just according to the degrees of Danger that he is in; so long as there are brisk hopes of Recovery, his Intentions of Amendment are weak and slender, but as Death comes nigher
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and nigher, his Resolutions increase and get strength ; and when at last he sees it is very unlikely he should live any longer, then he resolves soundly and stoutly to live better ; the plain meaning of which is this, he promises and vows to do that which according to his own Fears and Opinion is impossible to be done : and can we think that God will accept of a Purpose (let it be never so sincere) of living well, which is founded upon no other Consideration or Motive but only this, that I verily believe my Life is now all done ? A Resolution that is so far from being likely to hold, that it is most reasonable it should not ; for if I once am likely to live longer, the Reasons why I thus resolved, do then cease, and I may upon as good Grounds, and with as great Security as ever go on in my former Sins.

But farther, the dying Man resolves to leave all his Sins ; but, alas, they are not so easily parted with : he hath entertained and cherished them for a long time, and they are not now so quickly to be rooted out ; for it takes even good Men many Months and Years, a great part of their time spent in most hearty and frequent begging the Divine Assistance, and in calling together all the Arguments ima-

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ginable,

ginable, and using their utmost Strength of Mind to conquer and subdue but some one unreasonable Passion or Desire; and wicked Men in their life-time complain enough of the Difficulty of this: what more common with them than to say that it is impossible to resist the Allurements of good Company, or the Charms of Beauty, or the Temptations of Gain and Honor? nay, do they not often try to excuse themselves in many Sins, by pleading that they are so used to them that they cannot possibly leave them? as for instance, that they swear before ever they think of it, that they can't keep down their Passion when provoked; that they have tried to break off some lewd Customs, and have prevailed for a while, but that then they have returned upon them with greater Violence: and yet now when they come to die how easie is all this? A good Resolution and a few Prayers shall do all this great Work in a Trice, and an Hour or a Day shall vanquish all Sin in general, and at once, so as that the Man shall become fitted to stand before God.

When therefore Men make such Resolutions of Amendment, they resolve they know not what, for it is a Work of great
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Time and Patience, it requires long Consideration, assiduous Watchfulness and unwearied Diligence, to extirpate those inveterate Habits which by a long wicked Life we have contracted, and to mortifie those Lusts that have been so long used to tyrannize and domineer over us; this must be done by degrees and successively, by first conquering one Vice, then another; there is very little trust or heed therefore to be given to such hasty Resolves, violently extorted from us by a great and present Fear; and after all let them be never so honest and strong, yet still there is a great difference between doing a thing, and only resolving in our Minds to do it. And why should that be thought sufficient to save us at the last Gasp, which all grant is not sufficient to put us into a state of Salvation whilst we continue Well and in Health? But Wishes and Purposes made in the time of our Life and Strength do not alone make a bad Man good, why then should they alone be sufficient on our Death-bed? In a word, a Man that professeth himself a Scholar, but who hath spent all his days in Idleness, and made no Improvement of his Mind or Reason, and only at last resolves to study hard; ~~should~~ God spare his Life, may as

well and properly be said to have died a Learned Man, as one who being by Profession Christ's Disciple hath liv'd wickedly and unworthily all his days, and only at last, just before he dies, resolves to amend his Life, can ever on that account be thought to have passed out of this World a good Christian. Which leads me to the second thing;

II. To consider how far short all this comes of what the holy Scriptures require as the indispensable Conditions of Salvation; for should all this that I have now rehearsed, and whatever else can be added to it, which a wicked Man may do upon his Death-bed, should it all amount to Repentance, yet where in the mean time is Obedience to all the Laws of the Gospel?

As for those indeed who in the sincerity of their Heart have done God's Will, their Repentance shall be accepted for what they have fallen short in, or those few things they have miscarried and transgressed in, and which the best of us all have need to lament over; but I cannot think that a short Repentance at last was ever intended to answer for a universal Disobedience, and a whole Life of Wickedness;

kedness: for Repentance from dead Works, and Resolutions of a godly Life, are required as a Preparative for Christianity, and are therefore accounted necessary in Adult Persons even before their Baptism; but then by our Christian Profession, which we take upon us in Baptism, we are obliged to more, *viz.* to a new Life, and all manner of Purity and Righteousness: and therefore to hope to be happy in another World without living well here, is against our own very bargain, and that Agreement and Covenant which we made with God in our Baptism, wherein we expressly promised to walk in God's holy Commandments all our days: and therefore this keeping God's Commands must be as necessary for the obtaining the Reward, as sorrow for, or forsaking of our Sins.

This I shall illustrate briefly thus. The ways of Virtue and Righteousness, and of Sin and Wickedness, are not like two Roads that lie nigh or parallel one to the other, so that with ease, and in a little time, a Man may step out of one into the other; but they are perfectly opposite, and directly contrary to each other. Suppose that a Man for a great Reward be obliged in one day, between Sun-rising

and Sun-setting, to travel so many Miles Northward, and moreover by a solemn Oath (as all Christians are to the Practice of Christianity) engaged to the Performance of it; but that the Man freely presuming he hath time enough to do this in, doth not set out at the first rising of the Sun, but loiters and trifles away all his time; nay, not only so, but that for his Pleasure, or some little Convenience, he travels the quite contrary way, and goes Southward; and finding that Road very smooth, broad, and full of Company and Diversion, is by any little Temptations drill'd on still farther in it, wholly forgetting his Bargain; till on a sudden the Sun is just ready to set, Night comes on apace, and then the Wretch begins to consider how much he is out of his way, and finds himself weary and tired, and unfit for Travel, and curseth his own Folly, and promiseth if he were to begin again, he would go directly to the place commanded, but by that time he hath thus resolved, the Sun is set; shall this Man now obtain the promised Reward? Alas! before he can challenge that, he must first return back all the way he hath gone, even to the Point from whence he first set out, and also after that will have his whole days

days Journey still to go, and all that Task to do which he at first engaged himself to perform. So a wicked Man upon his Death-bed is not only to unravel all his former Works, to break off all his lewd Customs, to mortify all his foolish Passions and unruly Lusts, to forsake all his deadly Sins, and to repent of his past ill-spent Life; but he is then to live a new Life, he is then to accustom himself to the practice of Goodness, and to make it habitual to him; his Mind is then to be furnished with all Christian Virtues and Graces, he hath his whole Race still to run, and his Salvation still to work out; and is the least part of this possible to be done on a languishing Bed of Sickness?

Had we made Religion the business of our whole Lives, and in every thing exercised our selves to keep a Conscience unblameable; yet at such a time, when we come to die, we should find work and duty enough to employ us to the utmost. To manage our selves well and decently, and, as becomes Christians in such a condition, patiently to bear our Affliction, chearfully to submit to God's Will, to beg pardon of our manifold Failings and Miscarriages, readily to leave this World, and all that is dear to us in it, at his Call:

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these and many other, are the Exercises of a Christian on the Bed of Sickness. And how few are there in those Agonies that are able to bear up with any tolerable Manhood or Courage? And therefore we do not ordinarily account him a wise Man that will leave so much as his worldly Affairs then to be settled. How then, besides taking care of all these things at a time, when our very natural Powers and Faculties are disabled, when our Bodies are full of Pain, and our Minds full of Distractions and Perplexities, shall we be able also to do all that work for which our whole Life is little enough, and for which alone we were born into this World? And this the Devil subtilly foresees, that if he can but prevail with Men to put off the Care of Religion till a Sick-Bed, he shall find otherghes Employment for them then. He will not fail to be present at such an opportunity; and as before in their Life-time he told them it was too soon, so now he will himself suggest to them that it is too late to repent and turn to God.

Ye therefore that are apt to defer your Repentance till a Death-bed; condescend sometimes to visit your sick Neighbours and Friends: look on their Condition
when

when they lie on their dying Bed, and by it judg whether that be a fit time to do so great a Work in; see how troubled and disturbed their Thoughts are, how uneasy and distempered their Minds are as well as their Bodies, how fast their Reason and Understanding decays, how their Memories are lost, and their Senses fail them, and they cannot in the least help themselves. Is this a time, say they, to prepare for Eternity, to vanquish all Sin, and to obtain all Grace? Is this the fittest opportunity we can choose to make our Peace with God in, to sue out our Pardon, and to perform all those Duties of Piety, Mercy, Justice and Charity, that we were before wanting in? or rather, are not they then happy who at such a time have nothing else to do but to die? Would you but take the Opinion of those who are themselves in this condition, and be moved by their Judgments, they will all give their Suffrages for what I have been now proving. Do not they, when surprized by Death, offer all their Goods and Substance that they have so long and vainly laboured and toil'd for, for some longer time, for a little truce and respite? What are they not willing to give, on condition that God would spare them yet

a little while before they go hence, and be no more seen? Did you ever hear of any dying Penitent that did not a thousand times wish he had begun sooner? and how earnestly do such warn every one by their Example to take heed of trusting to a Death-bed Repentance? If therefore he that hath served the Lusts of the Flesh, and done his own Will during a long malicious Life can, for any thing a dying Person can do, be in any sense said to have liv'd soberly, righteously and godly, then may he be sure of Salvation. If we walk according to this Rule, then shall Peace be upon us: but how can a Man sow to the Flesh, and reap to the Spirit? serve the Devil all his Life long, and be crowned by God at his Death? But,

III. The last thing to be considered was, what Hopes or Encouragement God hath given us to believe that he will remit or abate of those Conditions of a good Life, which are propounded to us in the Gospel. And indeed there is very little to be found either of Promise or Example in Scripture to be a sufficient ground of Belief, that he will ordinarily accept of a Death-bed Repentance; for are not the Conditions of Salvation the same to Persons

sons sick and dying, as they are to Men alive and in health? Are they not both under the same Covenant? and is not the same actual Obedience required of all, under equal Penalties? or can we think that any Man shall fare better, and come off upon easier terms; or that God will deal more mildly and gently with him, and accept of less from him, only because he hath been so hardy and bold as to continue in Sin, and to put off his Duty towards God even to the very last minute of his Life?

But however, there are two Instances commonly mentioned in favor of a Death-bed Repentance. The first is that of the *Labourers*, in our Saviour's Parable, *that came into the Vineyard at the eleventh hour, and yet received equal Wages with those that came in at the first, and had born the heat of the day.* But it is here to be observed,

1. That these *Labourers* who came in so late, yet came in as soon as ever they were called and invited; for they gave this reason why they had stood so long there idle, *because no Man hath hired us.* Had they been often solicited by the Master, or his Servants, and offer'd Work, and all the day refused, and only then at last, and just in the close of the Evening,

been

been willing to have taken upon themselves the Service when it was over, this had been something like the Case I have been now speaking of, of *Christians* all their Lives long rejecting *Christ's* Yoke, but just when they are summoned to give an Account, willing to submit their Necks to it. But this Parable rather represents the Case of a *Heathen-man* that never heard of *Christ* or his Religion till a little before his Death; whose coming into the Church so late shall not therefore hinder his receiving a full Reward. But this is by no means the condition of those who have made a Covenant with *Christ* in Baptism, and after they have most notoriously failed of what they promised, do then only return to their Service *when the night is come in which no Man can work*. He that came in at the eleventh hour was under no engagement to work any sooner, he had no where promised it, nor had the Master commanded it, and therefore he was without fault.

2. He that came in at the eleventh hour did yet work one hour, that was indeed but a short time, yet however sufficient to render his Case very different from that Man's who comes in but at the twelfth; which is the case of the Death-bed Penitent.

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The other Instance often named in favor of a Death-bed Repentance, is that of one of the Thieves on the Cross, a Passage in the Gospel remembered better, and studied more by wicked Men, than any other Story whatever, tho the whole of it was so very miraculous and extraordinary, that the like never can be expected again, unless our blessed Lord should once more descend from Heaven, and suffer here amongst us, and one of us should happen to die in company with him; and then indeed from such a wonderful Repentance and Faith as his was, we might hope for the like Success and Acceptance. But this Example affords but little comfort to those who have for many years professed the Religion of Jesus, and yet deferred the Practice of it till the day of their Death.

But you'll say then, are there no hopes? is there no remedy? what must a wicked Man do in such a condition, when he happens to be thus surprized by Death? I am far from taking upon me to limit and confine the Mercies of God Almighty, they are *over all his Works*, and are as infinite as himself; such Persons therefore as have spent their days in Luxury and Profaneness, and contempt of all Religion,
but

but at last humbly beg Pardon, and heartily promise and resolve Amendment, we must leave to his Goodness and Pity, and gracious Compassion, who tho he ties us up to Rules, yet is not himself bound by them, and who may do more for us than he hath any where promised; and therefore Persons in such Circumstances ought to be encouraged and quickned to do all that they can, and at last to submit themselves to God's good Pleasure: and all that we can tell such Men is, that the greater and more remarkable their Repentance is, the more hopes of their Forgiveness; that sometimes there have appeared now and then some illustrious Instances of the Power of God's Grace and Spirit, Men who have been as famous for their signal Repentance as they were before for their Profaneness and Debauchery; and that where God gives such extraordinary Grace in this Life, it is to be hoped he will shew extraordinary Favor in the other; so that if such Men may be saved, it is nevertheless by way of Prerogative, not by the ordinary rule of Judgment; in is we know not how.

But yet lest Men should from hence presume to defer their Repentance, thus much must, I think, and ought to be said

said on the other side, that God hath no where expressly declar'd that he will accept of all our Sorrows, and Submissions, and Tears, and Promises, and Resolutions made on a Death-bed; that all these do not amount to what is the plain Condition of the Covenant of Grace; that tho' what God may do is not for us to define, yet he hath plainly enough told us what we are to do, and that it is the greatest madness in the World to run so great a hazard as that we cannot be saved without a Dispensation from the ordinary Rule. Had a wise Man a hundred Souls, he would not venture one of them on such uncertainties; and thus the antient Fathers have determin'd this Question, *Do I say (saith St. Augustin) such a one shall be damned? I dare not. Do I say he shall be saved? I cannot. What say I then? will you free your self from all uncertainty in this matter? Repent now whilst you are in health; forsake your Sins whilst you are able to commit them, and then you are sure of Pardon.* There is indeed another Church in the World that can teach Men how to be saved on a Death-bed even without Repentance, which hath found out ways to make it not only possible, but very easy, for any ungodly Wretch to secure himself from

from Hell at length when he comes to die by less than half an hour's work; but *we have not so learned Christ*, nor dare we be so false to our Trust, or to the Souls of Men, as to give them certain assurance of Everlasting Life, on any other terms than a constant, habitual Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel. The only certain way to die well, is to live well.

Nor shall I go about to determine how much of our Life must be spent in the practice of Righteousness and Goodness before we can be said to have lived well; since this varies according to the Circumstances of Men, which are infinite: this is as if a Men should ask how long it will be before a Fool can become wise, or an unlearned Man a Scholar, which differs according to the Capacity of the Man, his Industry and Opportunity, and God's Blessing. But only thus much, I think, may safely be said, that so much time of our Life is necessary to be spent in the practice of Goodness, as that we may from the temper of our Minds, and the course of our Actions, be truly denominated, holy, humble, pure, meek, patient, just, temperate, lovers of God and Men; for the Gospel promiseth not eternal Life and Glory to any but to Persons so and so qualified,

lified, and it is undoubted that a few pious Wishes, Prayers and Purposes, or a good Will made at our Death will not suffice to denominate us such. God doth not just watch how Men die, but he will judg every Man according to his Works, and the Deeds he hath done in the Flesh; and those Dispositions we have nourished, loved and delighted in all our Life, will follow and attend us to another World; and an evil Nature, however loth we are to it, or sorry for it, will sink us down into the deepest Hell.

To conclude all, the Use we are to make of all I have now said, is not to judg or censure others whose Lives we may have been acquainted with, and whose Condition according to this Doctrine may seem sad and deplorable; such we are to pity and pray for, and exercise our Charity upon, and leave to God's Mercy; but that we should all now resolve not to defer the doing of the least thing that we could wish done in order to the Salvation of our Souls, to a sick or death-bed; but that to day, even whilst it is called to day, we depart from Iniquity, and not be always beginning to live: we ought not to lose so much time as it would take to deliberate about this

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matter, for there is no room for Consultation here; he would be next to mad that should seriously advise whether he should be for ever happy or for ever miserable.

Let us all endeavour therefore so to live now as we shall wish we had done when we come to lie upon our Death-beds, or as we shall then resolve to live, in case God should continue our Life to us: let us pursue those things now, which we shall be able to think of and reflect upon with pleasure when we come to die, and presently forsake all those things, the remembrance of which at that time will be bitter to us: let us now, whilst we are well and in health, cherish the same Thoughts and Apprehensions of things, that we shall have when we are sick and dying: let us now despise this World as much, and think as ill of Sin, as seriously of God and Eternity as we shall then do: for this is the great Commendation of the righteous Man, that every one desires to die his Death, that at last all Men are of his Mind and Persuasion, and would chuse his Condition; *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.*

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I end all with those words of the wise Son of Sirach. *Learn before thou speak, and use Physick, or ever thou be sick; before Judgment examine thy self, and in the day of Visitation thou shalt find Mercy. Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of Sins shew Repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy Vows in due time, and defer not until Death to be justified. Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put it not off from day to day; for suddenly shall the Wrath of the Lord come forth, and in thy security thou shalt be destroyed, and perish in the day of Vengeance.*

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A
SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

The Eighth Sermon.

St. Matth. v. 34.

*But I say unto you, Swear not at
all.*

FOR our more clearly understanding
the Sense and Extent of this Pro-
hibition of our Blessed Saviour,
Swear not at all, these two things must be
observed.

I. That it was a common practice a-
mongst the *Jews* to swear by some of
God's

God's Creatures, which Custom prevail'd amongst them from a pretended Reverence of God's Holy Name: whenever they would affirm any thing with more than ordinary vehemence and earnestness, or beget an Assurance of what they said in another, they thought it not fit or decent presently to invoke the Sovereign God of Heaven and Earth, and on every slight and trivial occasion to run to the great Maker and Father of all things; but in smaller matters, and in ordinary talk, they would swear by their *Parents*, by the *Heavens*, by the *Earth*, by *Jerusalem*, the *Altar*, *Temple*, their *Head*, or the like: nor did they count such forms of swearing equally obliging with those Oaths wherein the Name of God was solemnly and expressly called upon. To this our Saviour in probability refers in the Verse foregoing my Text; *Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths*: they thought such only incurr'd the guilt and penalty of Perjury who stood not to those Promises they had confirmed by explicit calling the Lord Himself to Witness, but that there was but little Evil or Danger either in the common use of

Swearing by Creatures, or in breaking such Oaths.

Now our Saviour here absolutely forbids not only swearing by the Sacred Name of God, but also by any of his Creatures; *Swear not at all*, no not so much as *by the Heavens, by the Earth, or by Jerusalem*: and the Reason he gives is, because in all such Forms of Swearing by Creatures, tho God is not expressly named, yet He himself is really referred to, and tacitly invoked, who is the Supreme Lord and Maker of all: when you swear by the Heavens, you call upon Him whose Throne is there placed; when by the Earth, you appeal to Him whose Footstool it is; when by *Jerusalem*, you Implicitly and by just Interpretation swear by Him that is the great King thereof. This our Saviour as plainly delivers on another Occasion, *Matth. 23. 20. Whoso shall swear by the Altar, sweareth by it, and all things thereon; and whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein; and he that shall swear by Heaven, sweareth by the Throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.* So that in this Case, the truth is, if in such kind of Oaths, when Men swear by the Heavens, the Earth or the like, they mean only
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the material sensible Heavens and Earth, besides the Irreligion of vain swearing, they are guilty of plain Idolatry, in giving to the Creatures that Worship that is due only to God; as (supposing those inanimate Beings able to hear them and judg their Thoughts, and witness to the Sincerity of their Purposes, or to punish them for their Falseness and Hypocrisie; but) if they do not believe any such thing of those Creatures they swear by, then must such Oaths, if they have any sense at all, refer to God; and his Name must be understood to be invoked, even tho he be not expressly mentioned. So that this Prohibition of our Saviour may be accounted to extend to all such Forms of Speech amongst us, as are used as Oaths (and so understood) to beget Credit to what we say, tho God be not named. In short, all manner of Oaths, whether by the Majesty of God, or any of his Creatures, or any Words, Signs or Gestures, which by common Custom and Interpretation are accounted Swearing, may be understood to be hereby forbidden, as well as direct express Swearing; for a Man may swear without ever saying a Word, if by received usage such a Gesture doth signifie our calling God to witness;

witness; and so the Forms and outward Modes of Swearing are different in several Nations, tho the Reason and Sense of them be the same in all Places, whatever Words or Signs are used. If therefore such Phrases as these, *Faith, Troth*, and many others which I might name, are in ordinary esteem and practice thought to contain something more than an Affirmation, and are used and understood amongst us as Oaths, they are here forbidden to Christians under this rule of Swearing not at all, tho such words in themselves have not the force of Oaths, nor is God immediately appealed to by them.

II. It is farther here to be observed, that tho all manner of Swearing whether by the Name of God, or any of his Creatures be thus prohibited, *Swear not at all*, yet this must be understood only of Arbitrary Voluntary Swearing in ordinary Talk and Discourse, when there is no great Reason, no justifiable Occasion for it. It is to be acknowledged that some of the Antient Fathers from these words did conclude it utterly unlawful for a Christian at any time to swear; some of their sayings to this purpose are quoted by *Grotius* in his Comment upon these words: but then it is to be considered, 1. That

1. That there were but some few of them of this Opinion, and that against the current Doctrine of the greatest part of the Primitive Christians ; and,

2. Against the known allowed Practice amongst them ; for we all along find there were many Christians in the Armies of the Heathen Emperors, and they could not have served under them without taking the Military Oath, which they did not use to scruple, so they were not put to swear by any of their *Genii*, or *Heathen Deities*, or *Fortune*, or the like.

3. Their great Argument against taking of Oaths was drawn from the invincible Faith and Truth of Christians, who upon no consideration whatever could either be forc'd or won to affirm what they knew to be false, or promise what they never intended to perform : and this they were so remarkable for, that they thought it a Diminution or scandalous Affront offered to them to be put to their Oaths ; they always had such a regard to their Words, and it was so Sacred a thing at all times to speak Truth, that they would not be so much distrusted or disparaged as to have the Security of an Oath required of them ; the constant Tenour of their Lives they thought did bear a greater Testimony

to what the Christians affirmed, and render it more credible than the Oaths of any other Men could what they witnessed.

But now because in latter days some *Settaries* both here and elsewhere have from these words, *Swear not at all*, pleaded against the Lawfulness of taking any Oaths, tho thereto required by the Magistrate, tho it be an Oath of Allegiance to their Prince, or when they give Testimony in a publick Cause; I shall briefly and plainly make out to you that this Prohibition of our Saviour must admit of some exceptions, and be restrained only to vain and rash Oaths in our ordinary Discourse: which I shall do by desiring you to consider,

(1.) That in other general Prohibitions it is acknowledged by all that we must make the same or like exceptions. Thus, tho our Saviour hath said a little before these words in this Sermon on the Mount, v. 21. *Thou shalt not Kill, and whosoever shall Kill shall be in danger of the Judgment*; yet we all grant that this must be confined to private Persons, that this forbids not the Magistrate's inflicting Capital Punishments; and then that as to private Persons, it is meant only of killing innocent Men; but that still it is lawful

lawful for us in the preservation of our own Lives to kill those who unjustly assault us, these Cases must be reserved: so here *Swear not at all*, that is, not of your own Motion, without any necessary or sufficient cause. But this doth not infringe the Right which Magistrates have to impose Oaths on their Subjects, and to require the utmost and greatest security for their Fidelity and Obedience; this doth not forbid Swearing when it is requisite for the determining of important Controversies or Distribution of Justice, when it is for the publick Good, that our Testimony should be credited and made more valid by the Solemnity of an Oath. And that such exceptions as these must be allowed from this general Rule, will appear,

(2.) If we consider the positive Command that is opposed to this Prohibition, *Swear not at all, but let your Communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh of evil. Let your Communication, i. e. your Speech, your ordinary familiar Discourse, be yea, yea; nay, nay: which was a proverbial way of expressing an honest Man whom you may believe and trust. Justorum etiam est etiam, & non eorum est non: His ay was ay, and his no was no. His Promises*

mises and Performances did exactly and constantly agree: without any more ~~add~~ you may give credit to, and rely upon whatever he says. *Whatever is more than these, cometh of evil*; i.e. Whatsoever is more than bare affirming or denying any thing, (that is still in our Communication, in our ordinary Talk and Discourse) is from *evil*; from Mens so commonly breaking of Promises and speaking of Falsities; from whence that lewd Custom of adding Oaths proceeds, because they cannot be believed without them. Now therefore since our Saviour is here directing us how to govern our common Discourse and Conversation together, the Prohibition also in the beginning must be restrained to the same matter, and so the full sense of the Words seems to me to be this. In your *Communication, familiari Sermone*, in your common Talk use no swearing, not so much as by any Creature; but let it suffice barely to affirm or deny, and be always so true to your Words, that nothing farther need be desired or expected from you: all other Confirmation in such ordinary Affairs is practised only by such as are used to lye and dissemble, and intend to impose upon others.

(3.) That

(3.) That our Saviour did not here forbid all Swearing, whatever cause there might be for it, as a thing in it self unlawful, we are fully satisfied from the Example of St. Paul, who certainly understood his Master's mind in this particular. Now it is a very unreasonable thing to imagine, that he should so often swear, and that by the Name of God too, that such his Oaths should be recorded in the Scriptures, and that there should not be the least intimation of his sinning in so doing, if all Swearing was utterly prohibited by his Lord and Master. I shall propound two or three eminent Instances to shew, that in serious and great Matters of mighty Concernment he made no scruple of adding the Confirmation of an Oath; Gal. 1. 20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I Lye not.* He bears witness to the Truth of his Writings by an expresse Oath; Rom. 1. 9. *For God is my Witness, whom I serve, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my Prayers.* It was of great Moment that in the beginning of his Epistle he should persuade those, to whom he did address himself, of his Good Will toward them. How well therefore he did wish them, he calls God to Witness, which is the formal
Essence

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Essence of an Oath. Thus again; to name no more, 2 Cor. II. 31. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is Blessed for evermore, knoweth that I Lye not:* which is a plain appeal to God's Testimony. So that when the Glory of God and the publick Good was engaged, he thought it not unlawful to invoke God's Holy Name, and to call his Majesty for a witness of his Truth, or the avenger of his Falshood. Thus *our Blessed Saviour* himself when he stood before the *High-Priest* of the *Jews*, did not refuse to answer upon Oath; *Matth. 26. 63. The High-Priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God, which amongst the Jews was the form of giving an Oath; to which our Saviour answered, Thou hast said; that is, upon my Oath it is as thou sayst. Nay, to make all sure, that there is no evil in Swearing when it is done gravely and seriously, and upon an important Occasion that requires it; we find that God himself hath been pleased to give us his Oath. Tho it were impossible for him to Lye, yet that we might have strong Consolation and full Assurance, to shew the Heirs of the Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, he confirmed it*

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it by an Oath; and when he could not swear by a Greater, he swore by Himself; Heb. 6. 13. And therefore it must be very absurd to deny amongst Christians the Lawfulness of doing that, tho upon never so great Reason, which St. Paul so often did, nay which God Almighty, who is Truth it self, did yet vouchsafe, out of condescension to our Weakness, to do more than once. Not now to mention *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*, both of which hath in them the Nature of Oaths, and are therefore called *Sacraments*.

(4.) We are to consider that Swearing rightly circumstanced is so far from being a thing in it self evil, and so universally forbidden, that it is indeed a most eminent part of Religious Worship and Divine Adoration, by which we do most signally own and recognize God Almighty to be the great Sovereign Lord and Governour of the World, the Highest and Supremest Power, to which the last and final Appeal is in all Cases to be made. By it we acknowledg the immensity of his Presence, his exact Knowledg and continual Care of Human Affairs, and all things that happen here below; his all-seeing Eye, that he searcheth into the depth of our Hearts, and is conscious to our
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most inward Thoughts and secret Meanings. We do by it avow him as the grand Patron of Truth and Innocence, as the severe Punisher and Avenger of Deceit and Perfidiousness. And therefore doth God often in Holy Scripture appropriate this to himself; *Him only shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and shalt swear by his Name.* And if this be done with that Consideration and Solemnity which doth become such a special part of Devotion; upon an occasion that doth deserve, and that will in some measure excuse our engaging the Divine Majesty as a Witness in it; I say, if it be performed with due Aw and Reverence, with hearty Intention for a considerable Good, we do, thus calling upon God when we swear by him, honour and glorifie his Great and Holy Name, as well as by Prayer or Praises, or any other Act of Religious Worship whatever.

(5.) Add to this the Necessity of taking Oaths in order to Civil Government, Publick Administration of Justice, and the maintaining of good Order and Peace in Societies. And therefore the Apostle tells us, *Heb. 6. 16. That an Oath for Confirmation to Men is the end of all Strife; and that not by particular Customs and Laws prevail.*

prevailing in some places only, but from the Appointment of God, the reasonableness and fitness of the thing it self, and the constant Practice of all the World in all Ages: for as far and wide as the sense of a Deity hath spread it self, hath also the Religion of an Oath, and the final Determination of Matters in difference, by calling to Witness the Lord and Maker of all things; this being the utmost assurance, and the surest Pledg any can give of their Faith and Sincerity. For nothing can be imagined sufficient or effectual to engage Men to speak Truth, or to be faithful and constant to their Promises, if an Oath doth not. He must surely renounce all Sense and Fear of God, all Conscience of Duty or Regard to the Almighty's Love and Favour, who can with open Face call him to testify to a Lye, or challenge him to punish him if he speaks not true, when yet at that very time he knows he does not. This is the greatest Security Men can give of their Honesty, and that they mean as they say. And it being necessary for the Government of the World in so many Cases (not proper now to be named) that Truth should be found out, and the greatest Certainty of it be given that can possibly, and that

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Men should by the strictest ties be obliged to some Duties; it thence also becomes necessary that Oaths should sometimes be required, especially when Men cannot by other means well assure the Sincerity of their Intentions, or secure the Fidelity of their Resolutions.

I confess amongst Christians in the first Ages I believe Oaths were not so commonly requir'd in such little matters, as now sometimes they are; but the reason was because Truth and Honesty then prevailed far more among them, and Lying was then more scandalous than, I fear, Perjury is now: but Perfidiousness and Dissembling, and Equivocating, and Fraud increasing, have made the use of Oaths more ordinary than otherwise would have been necessary. For if Christians did generally observe the Laws of their Religion in all other Instances, Men would fly to this greatest security only in extreme and highest Cases, and not find it needful to require it in common and more trivial Matters.

(6.) Lastly, I only observe farther, that what seems thus to be the Doctrine of our Saviour concerning Swearing, was delivered by the Philosophers of old amongst the Heathens as agreeable to the
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Light of Nature and right Reason: that is to say, they advised their Scholars to forbear all Oaths as much as possibly they could; never to swear but when it was necessary, to reverence an Oath (as *Pythagoras* express'd it in his golden Verses) not easily, or lightly, or wantonly to take God's Name into their Mouths. I forbear to trouble you with the Authors, or the Sentences themselves: and I propound this only to shew that the wise Men of this World did agree with our Blessed Saviour in this Rule which he hath prescribed to us concerning Swearing; and I have been the larger in it, that you might see what little reason any *Enthusiasts* amongst us have to stand out so stubbornly against the wholesom Laws of our Country, and the Proceedings of the Courts of Judicature; who, tho it were to save the King's Life, will not give their Testimony upon Oath, because our Saviour hath said, *Swear not at all.*

The sum of all is: Our Saviour absolutely forbids Swearing in our Communication or ordinary Discourse together, and about the unlawfulness of this there is no Dispute; and strange it is that against such express words of our blessed Lord and Master, Men should so openly allow them-

selves in such a vile Practice, and yet have the face to call themselves his Disciples and Followers. This evil of voluntary rash Swearing hath prevailed among us even almost beyond all hope of Cure and Remedy. That great Orator *St. Chrysostom* made no less than twenty Homilies or Sermons against this foolish Vice, and yet found it too hard for all his Reason or Rhetorick, till at length he attempted to force his Auditors to leave off that Sin; if for no better Reason, yet that he might chuse another Subject. They are ordinarily Men only of debauched Minds and Consciences that freely indulge themselves in it; and if any such now hear me, I cannot expect by those few words I have now to deliver, to dissuade them from it. I had rather endeavour to offer something to *your* Consideration who are not yet infected by it, to persuade you to watch severely against it, and resolve never to comply with such an impious senseless Custom.

I. Consider what a horrid Affront it is to the Divine Majesty. All Sin reflects dishonourably upon God, but other Sins do this by consequence only: this directly flies in his face, and immediately impug-
neth his Justice and Power. Other Sins
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are Acts of Disobedience, but 'tis high Contempt of God, thus to toss about his Excellent and Glorious Name in our unhallowed Mouths, and to prostitute it to so vile a Use as only to fill up the Vacuities of our idle Prattle. That Great and Terrible Name of God which all the Angels and Host of Heaven with the profoundest Submission continually adore; which rends the Mountains, and opens the Bowels of the deepest Rocks; which makes Hell tremble, and is the Strength and Hope of all the ends of the Earth; our only Refuge in the day of Trouble; the very thought whereof should fill all sober Persons with a Reverential Awe and Horror; how do Men most impudently and rashly almost every minute pollute and tear without fear or sense, or observing what they say, as if God Almighty, the Maker and Judg of us all, were the meanest and most despicable Being in the Universe? What unaccountable Boldness and intolerable Sauciness is this, to dare to invoke the dreadful Majesty of Heaven and Earth to witness to every impertinent Saying, silly Story, vain Fancy, almost every five words we utter? Thus at our pleasure to summon our Omnipotent Creator, as if he were at our beck, and a

Slave to our Humour? Thus to play and dally with him who is a consuming Fire, and can in the twinkling of an Eye make us all as miserable as we have been sinful? How shall we ever be able in the day of our Fears to address our selves to the Throne of his Grace, whom every time we speak, we thus madly defy? With what Shame, and Regret, and Confusion must we needs appear before his Judgment-seat, whose Honourable Name we have thus foully profaned and used so ignominiously? Can they ever think to plead that Blood of our dearest Lord, and those Wounds made by the Spear and Nails in his most precious Body, for the Pardon and Expiation of their most grievous Sins, who thus daily have made a mock of them? Can they ever with the least hope of success pray God, when they come to die, to deliver them from that Damnation which they have a thousand times before wished to themselves?

And yet this Sin, which argues such Slight and Abuse of the Divine Majesty, such Rudeness towards him, and draws so many dire Consequences after it, is now a-days (pardon me if I say it) one of the fashionable Accomplishments of too many of those that should be Precedents of
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Civility or good Manners to others: but this is so sad a Consideration, that I cannot endure to dwell longer upon it.

I proceed to other Mischiefs of this Vice, tho none need be named after this; for those whom the Awe of God and Sense of his Power and infinite Greatness will not keep and restrain from such desperate Profanations of his holy Name, it is not to be imagined that any less Arguments should.

2. This practice of common Swearing must of necessity frequently involve Men in the heinous Sin of Perjury. He that swears at every turn in his ordinary discourse, how often doth he call God to witness even to what he knows is false, and as often forget to do what before God he hath engaged himself to perform. If he be afraid of this crying Sin of Perjury, and be put in mind of what by his needless Oath he had obliged himself unto, how many Inconveniences will his Rashness continually expose him to? You all know how Herod was loth for his Honour's sake before all his Court to violate his hasty Oath, and how that cost the Head of the greatest Prophet that ever was. By customary using of God's Sacred Name Men come to vent it when they

think not of it, without any Forethought or Consideration, and by it swear to things impossible or romantick, to their own Fictions and Dreams, which they neither believe themselves, nor yet intend to deceive others into a belief of; and oftentimes transported by Anger or Rage, they swear to things they repent of when they are calm and sober, and are then quite of another Mind: so that false swearing is the certain never-failing Effect of much swearing; nay indeed it is only Chance or Luck in such as every time in the hurry of their Discourse call upon God's Name that they do not, not only vainly swear, but also impiously forswear themselves; for while they thus back almost every Affirmation with an Oath, how idle, uncertain or doubtful soever the Matter be, without making any difference, or at all weighing what they say, or being satisfied concerning the truth of it, or knowing their own Minds about it, they cannot be freed from the guilt of the Sin of Perjury, tho' what they say should happen not to be false, or they should be as good as their word, it being by fortune only that it doth prove so. And he that swears to a thing that chances to be true (if he knew it not certainly, or did

did not consider it whether it were so or no, but unadvisedly sealed it with an Oath, tho' it be as he did swear) yet must be presumed guilty of this Crime of Perjury in the sight of God; and then I leave it to your selves to judg how often by this vile Custom of swearing Men do forswear themselves.

3. From hence it follows that this Sin of vain and rash swearing in our ordinary Discourse is of very bad Influence to the publick State; nothing is so pernicious to the Government, nay nothing is so destructive of our Liberties and Properties, of which we are so fond, and for which we are so zealous, as this wicked Practice of swearing upon all occasions: as it makes Oaths become cheap and vile, so it derogates from their Sacredness and Authority; for what reason can there be to believe, that he who makes no Conscience of those many Oaths he daily belches forth upon the slightest Provocations, should be of another Opinion, and look on himself as more strictly tied up by them when he swears Allegiance to his Prince, or gives his Testimony in a Court of Judicature? Why should he be more afraid or concerned for calling God to witness in a Cause wherein his Neighbour's Estate,

Estate, good Name or Life is engaged, than he is in his private Conversation of invoking the Majesty of Heaven a hundred times in a Day? The fear of the Penalty which the Laws have appointed for Perjury may indeed move him in such Cases wherein there is danger of his being discovered, and there is likewise a little more solemnity in such publick Swearing before a Magistrate; but yet what is that to one who hath cast off all Sense and Fear of God, and every Hour dares openly reproach and despise Him? So that the publick Laws ought to provide against this piece of Debauchery as the Bane of all Society; and we cannot answer it in Prudence, to have any Intercourse, to hold any Correspondence or Transactions with, or in any case to trust or rely on his Word who feareth not an Oath: for,

4. This practice of Swearing in our ordinary Discourse doth highly detract from the Credit of the Person that useth it, it renders justly suspicious every Word he says and confirms with an unnecessary Oath; for if the thing be true and certain, and the Person of unblemished Faith, what need can there be of an Oath to vouch it? but if he swears to it, he declares himself not to be worthy of Belief, that his
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Word ought in no case to be taken, since in the most indifferent Matters he chuses still to warrant it with an Oath, and by thus doing most deservedly forfeits all Credit and Repute among considering persons?

A truly honest Man is so well assured of his own Veracity, that he counts it wholly needless and useless to offer an Oath as a Pledg or Pawn of the Truth of what he affirms: but if upon every Word I am apt to swear to it, this is an undoubted sign that either I intend to deceive in that particular, or else that I am so used to lie, that I cannot expect to be believed without an Oath.

5. This is a Vice most distasteful and ungrateful to all the rest of Mankind, most strangely offensive to those we converse with. *The Talk of him that sweareth much, saith a Wise Man, maketh the Hair to stand upright, and their Brawls make one stop his Ears.* If Men harden themselves against other Arguments taken from the Wickedness and Irreligion of this Practice, yet this methinks ought to prevail something with those that pretend to Honour and genteel Carriage, viz. that this is the most uncivil and the rudest thing that can be offered to other Men; it rankly savours of Ill-manners and want
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of Breeding for them to be continually defying of that Being which all other Men adore, and spitting out their Venom against that God whom the rest of Mankind profess to love and honour above all things. Should one of our hectoring Swearers come into a Company, the greatest part of which he knew highly valued and prized an absent Friend, never mentioned him but with all the Kindness and Respect imaginable, called him their Patron, professed mighty Obligations to him, and believed him one of the best of Men; would it pass for a thing tolerably becoming or decent for him every word, when no occasion was offered, to fall a bespattering and vilifying this Person, so dear to the Company, and to speak of him with the greatest Contempt and Despite? Now such is God to the greatest part of the World, they own all that they have or are to be from Him alone, that he is their great Benefactor and Saviour, that they are infinitely engaged to him, that they desire his Love and Favour above all this World: how is it sufferable then, in Men of Fashion and Reputation especially, (as is the common Practice of too many) when they meet with Persons that are more than others concerned for the Honour

nour of God, to be ever and anon with their profane Talk pelting this Holy Being, polluting his Name with their filthy Speech, outbraving his Majesty, chusing to do that which they know grates most harshly upon other Men, and which they hate above any thing in the World ?

6. That which mightily aggravates this Madnes and Folly is, that it is such a Sin as we have no Temptation to commit, nothing to move or sway us towards it ; it gratifies no natural Inclination, it produceth no Pleasure ; no Gain or Worldly profit accrues to us by it ; it affordeth us not so much as any short temporal Recompence for the Venture we run, and the dangerous Hazards we expose our selves unto. Other sorts of Sin have something to excuse them, our Natures and bodily Tempers may strongly incline us to some other Sins : The covetous Man hath his full Bags and great Estate to plead in his behalf ; and as for the Voluptuous Epicure, his Appetites and Lusts are tickled with the variety of sensual Delights ; and the Ambitious Man hath the Contentment he takes in his Honours and Advancements to answer for the loss of the Peace of his Mind and a good Conscience ; the Drunkard pleads the good-
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ness of his Wine and Company ; the unclean Person talks of the resistless Charms of Beauty : but the Swearer selleth his Soul for nothing ; so that of all wicked Men he is the most silly and unreasonable, and makes the worst and maddest bargain for himself. Nay, other ways of Sinning may be almost called Wisdom, if compared to this ; for other Sinners either project something future, and are delighted with the Hopes and Expectations of it, or enjoy something present that pleases them, and satisfies some craving inordinate Desire : but this is pure Sinning for Sinnings sake, only in compliance with an ugly imperious Custom too much in vogue and fashion.

7. There is no kind of Sin whatever that doth so highly provoke God Almighty to inflict some remarkable Exemplary Judgment on a Person or Nation, even in this Life, as this practice of Vain Swearing by his Name. This almost necessitates him to thunder from Heaven after some extraordinary manner, to vindicate his Power and Justice and Authority, all which are so notoriously abused, blasphemed and challenged by such hideous Oaths and dire Imprecations. He is e'en forced by such horrid Desiances
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and outrageous Darings of him to shew his Strength and Might to the Children of Men, by sending some grievous Plagues and sore Calamities amongst them, by which they may perceive He will not always bear such bold Prophanations of his Truth and Honour and Majesty ; but will at length return those Curses upon Men which they have so often wished to themselves : that He will at last punish and avenge himself of those who have so openly and frequently provoked Him to it by their dreadful Appeals to Him.

The whole Nation of the *Jews*, that forlorn and forsaken People, the Scorn of all the Earth, are to this day a standing Monument of God's implacable Anger and Wrath upon a like Occasion, when they so solemnly cursed themselves, and prayed that the Blood of the Holy *Jesus* might be upon their Heads, and the Heads of their Children. God is jealous and tender of his Name, and will not always suffer it to be scorn'd and reproached. *Because of Swearing*, saith the Prophet, *the Land mourneth*. God is engaged in Honour to right himself, and maintain his Name from such foul Contempt, lest Men should begin to think either that he is not at all, or that he is deaf to all their loud Calls and impudent Invocations.

8. Lastly,

8. Lastly, I only add this one peculiar consideration to you who now hear me, assembled in this Place for the Worship of that Great God, for the Honour of whose Name I am pleading: That this Custom of vain Swearing is the great Scandal to our Church of *England*, and those that adhere to it in its present Establishment. This was of old, and is still the great Objection against those of the Church-way, as they ordinarily call us, that so many among us allow themselves in this sinful Practice; nay not only use it, but look on it as their Credit so to do. You see the Fruit, they say, of your Common Prayers, of your Read Devotions, of your Decent and Orderly Worship which you so much plead for. You may judge of the Goodness and Efficacy of that Way, by those Oaths and Curses that abound so much in those of your Profession. And really, what can we answer to this Charge? Can we absolutely deny it? Must we not rather confess, amongst Friends at least, that it is in some measure true, that the Separatists and Dissenters do more generally restrain themselves from this lewd Practice, and do not so ordinarily allow themselves in this Vice, as too many among us do? Now it is
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not a sufficient Answer to this to recriminate, and tell them of as great Sins that they are guilty of; that they can Lye, Cheat and Dissemble, are Factious and Ungovernable, tho they will not Swear, which is sometimes replied in this Case: for this, tho never so true, is not sufficient to wipe off this Disgrace and Reflection from our Church. But the true answer to this is, That thus it always was in the World, and ever will be; that where there are different Opinions and Parties in Religion, and one is favoured by the publick Laws, and countenanced by the Government, all those who are of no Religion will be sure to be of that Side which is uppermost, which the King and Court is of, which is freest from Danger. So that all the Profane, Wicked, Dissolute Livers will be of our Church, as long as the Doctrine of it is the Established owned Religion of the Nation: but if ever the Tide should turn, and another Party get the upper-Hand, they should have the Company of those Men also, unless some Worldly Interest did interfere and hinder them. Such Men of such loose Principles and seared Consciences matter not what Religion they profess, or whether any at all. But do these re-

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ceive any Encouragement or Countenance amongst us? Do we boast of their Godliness? Do we account these to live answerably to their Profession? Do not we complain of them as well as our Adversaries? And would to God all such as hate to be reformed, would even leave our Church. 'Twould be a happy Day if all such ungodly wicked Wretches, who will not be won over by the excellent Means and Arguments of our Religion, would also forsake that Profession which in Practice they disown, nay, blemish and discredit; that they would be of any Party, run over to our Enemies, rather than continue to dishonour the best settled and purest Church in the World. Ye now who, by your Presence at these her solemn Devotions, seem concern'd for the Glory, Preservation and Security of our Church, it is much in your Power to wipe off such Blots and Aspersions, to answer such Reflections, and to stop the Mouths of all Opposers, by a due care and Government of all your Words and Actions; and by the Innocency and Unblameableness of your Lives, your unfeigned Piety and Reverence towards God, your invincible Truth and Faithfulness, and other remarkable Virtues, to re-
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commend our Church even to those who are without: especially be persuaded to join all your Endeavours against this Vice by keeping a strict Guard against it in your selves, by keeping from all appearance of it; by not suffering it in your Inferiors, or those that have any dependence upon you; by mildly and seasonably warning and reprovng those of your Neighbours and Acquaintance that are guilty of this Folly. In a word, let us all observe such exact Truth in all our Chat and Discourse, be so constant to our Promises, that at any time our Word may pass without any farther Engagement, that we may never think it necessary to assure our Credit or Faith by an Oath.

Among the *Romans* the Priest of *Jupiter* was in no case permitted to swear, because it was not handfom that he who was so nearly related to their great God, and charged with such Divine Matters as the care of Religion, should be distrusted about small things. And we know among our selves Solemn formal Oaths are not in many Cases required from Persons of Honour; their Word upon their Honour hath equal Credit with the express Oath of Inferior Persons. Now such would our Blessed Saviour have all his

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Disciples to be, so true and faithful, that there should be no need of Oaths to confirm their Speeches, but that the Holiness and Strictness of their Lives should give such undoubted Testimony to, and command so firm a Belief of all they say, that no farther Asseveration should be able to vouch it more. I conclude all with those Sayings of the wise Son of Sirach, *Ecclw.* 23. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *Accustom not thy Mouth to Swearing, neither use thy self to the naming of the Holy One. For as a Servant that is continually beaten shall not be without a blew Mark, so he that sweareth and nameth God continually shall not be faultless. A Man that useth much Swearing shall be filled with Iniquity, and the Plague shall never depart from his House. If he shall offend, his Sin shall be upon him; and if he acknowledg not his Sin, he maketh a double Offence. And if he swear in vain, he shall not be innocent, but his House shall be full of Calamities. There is a Word that is clothed about with Death, God grant that it be not found in the Heritage of Jacob: for all such things shall be far from the Godly, and they shall not wallow in their Sins. Use not thy Mouth to intemperate swearing, for therein is the Word of Sin.*

But I say unto you, Swear not at all.

A SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

The Ninth Sermon.

St. Matth. i. 21.

*---And thou shalt call his Name Jesus;
for He shall save his People from
their Sins.*

THAT the Appearance of the Ever-
blessed Son of God in our Mor-
tal Nature was upon some very
Great and most Important Design, not o-
therwise at all, or at least not so happily
by any other means to be accomplished,
every one must needs grant at first hear-
ing. It could not be any indifferent tri-

vial Errand or Business that a Person of such infinite Honour and Dignity was employ'd about, which brought down God himself from the Regions of Glory and Light inaccessible to dwell in an earthly Tabernacle, and to veil the Splendor of his Majesty with a Body of Flesh. This was such a surprizing Condescension of him that had lived from all Eternity in the Bosom of his Almighty Father; this signified such wonderful Love and Regard to that Human Nature he assumed, that all Men cannot but reasonably promise themselves the greatest Advantages imaginable from such a gracious Undertaking. That our forlorn Nature should be thus highly honoured and exalted, as to be after such an unspeakable manner united to the Divine, doth evidently assure us of God's Good-will towards sinful Men, that he yet entertained thoughts of Mercy towards us, and was loth that the Folly of his Creatures should prove their irrecoverable Ruin.

Had God sent a Message to us by the meanest Servant in his Heavenly Court, it had been a Favour too great for us to have expected, and for which we could never have been enough thankful. Had he commanded a Host of illustrious Angels

to have flown all over the Earth, and loudly to have proclaim'd God's willingness to have been reconciled to Men, should we not all with mighty Joy and Wonder have regarded and adored such stupendous Grace and Goodness, crying out, *Lord, what is Man, that thou art thus mindful of him? or the Son of Man, that thou thus visitest him?*

But that God himself should descend from his Heavenly Habitation, to be clothed with our Rags; that He *who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, should take on him the form of a Servant, and be found in the fashion and likeness of sinful Flesh; this astonishes not only Men, but Angels themselves; for he took not on himself the Nature of Angels, nor appeared for their Rescue and Deliverance, who had left their first Mansions of Glory; but was pleased so far to humble himself, as to undertake the Cause and Patronage of us vile Worms, sinful Dust and Ashes, even whilst we were Enemies, Traytors and Rebels to his Divine Majesty, and utterly unworthy of the least gracious Look from him, tho we had never so earnestly besought it. In our behalf it was that he did mediate and intercede; he step'd in between guilty wretched Us and God's

Justice ; perfected our Redemption, procured our Liberty, and purchased eternal Life and Happiness for all Men on the easy and pleasant Conditions of the Gospel. *And thou shalt call his Name Jesus ; for he shall save his People from their Sins.*

In my Discourse on these words I shall only,

- I. Shew you how, or by what means the Son of God became our *Jesus*, or did save Men from their Sins.
- II. Draw some plain Inferences from it.

I. How, or by what means the Son of God became our *Jesus*, or did save Men from their Sins.

Now in order to the Salvation of Sinners, the great End of our Saviour's Incarnation, these two things were necessary to be done ; one of which principally respects God, the other Sinners themselves.

1. In order to the Salvation of Sinners it was necessary to obtain and purchase the Pardon of their Sins, and Reconciliation with God.

2. It was farther necessary that Sinners themselves should be reform'd, and turned

turned from their Sins to the Love and Practice of true Righteousness and Goodness; that so they might be in some measure qualified and disposed for God's Grace and Mercy.

I. In order to the Salvation of Sinners it was necessary to obtain and purchase the Pardon of their Sins, and Reconciliation with God. It is true indeed, that God Almighty by the unlimited Goodness and Compassionateness of his own Nature is infinitely inclin'd to all Acts of Favour and Pity; and he might without wrong to any one (if he had seen it fit) absolutely have pardoned the Sins of Mankind, without any other Consideration than their Repentance: but out of his infinite Wisdom he rather chose to dispense his pardoning Grace after such a manner as should not at all seem to reflect upon his exact Justice, immaculate Holiness, and unchangeable Truth; and might not give the least Encouragement to Sinners to presume farther upon his Mercy and Goodness, as it would have done for God lightly and easily to have passed by such notorious Offences, and without any Satisfaction to have receded from all his Threatnings. He would not therefore propound terms of Reconciliation with Man-

Mankind without some publick Reparation of the Divine Honour and Authority, and open Manifestation of his just Displeasure against Sin and Disobedience.

(1.) In order to our Reconciliation with God, it was necessary that some publick Reparation should be made of the Divine Honour and Authority. The Sins of the World were an unspeakable Affront to the Divine Majesty, and an open Scorn put upon his most excellent Laws and Government. Now our merciful Creator inclined to forgive the Sons of Men that great Debt which they were never able themselves to discharge, yet would so contrive it, that his Clemency should no ways obscure or impair the Glory of his Sovereign Dignity, Justice and Holiness. It was most highly congruous, that whilst he pardoned the Offenders, his Government should be acknowledged, the Righteousness of his Laws vindicated, his Honour and Authority secured.

All which was most effectually done by our blessed Saviour, the Son of God's negotiating our Peace in our Nature, putting himself into the place of Sinners, and answering all Demands for us. By this the infinite Holiness of God's pure Nature was declared to all the World, in that
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he would have no intercourse with, nor ever receive into his Favour such vile unworthy Wretches as we were; but only in and through so holy, so perfect a Mediator. By this it appear'd that God at first upon good Reasons established his Laws, and propounded his Threatnings, since he would not without such a glorious Compensation go back from them. We have now the greatest cause given us to tremble at his severe Justice, to adore his Sovereign Power and Dominion, even whilst we admire and feel his Love and Kindness to us; since no other Consideration could prevail with God to remit our Offences, but the powerful Interposition of his only begotten Son, and his suffering in our Nature those Pains and Torments which were due to our Sins.

(2.) By this appearance of the Son of God was God's Hatred and grievous Displeasure against Sin most abundantly manifested, in that he would not hear of, nor offer any Pardon or Mercy without such a valuable Satisfaction. Here God poured forth his utmost Vengeance against Sin, when he delivered up to such a cruel and cursed Death that Person that was most dear to him, and least deserved any such Treatment from him, before he would forgive

forgive it. Can we now possibly think that there is but little Evil in, or that God is not much offended with that which could no other ways be expiated but by such precious Blood? Can any Man imagine that it is a cheap thing to sin, when God himself in our Flesh was bruised and buffeted, crowned with Thorns, and nailed to the Cross for it? That surely was no Trifle or indifferent matter that caused the Son of God to bleed and die. That Sore was deadly that could be cured by no other Balsam but his Blood. If any thing could shew the fierceness of God's Wrath against Sin, surely it must be the gaping Wounds and bleeding Side of our Saviour. Look on this his wonderful Humiliation; see the Pits that were digged in his Hands and Feet, and the Furrows that were made on his Back, and then tell me what an accursed thing must that be that made God so displeased, and fastned our blessed Lord to the Gibbet. So that by our Saviour's Incarnation, obedient Life, and patient Death, the Divine Honour was more illustriously repaired, his Authority more clearly vindicated, his Justice and Severity against Sin more openly declared, Disobedience more highly disgraced and condemned,

demned, than if all the Sons of *Adam* had perished eternally in their Rebellion. But this being once done by the Son of God's appearing in our behalf, this great Propitiatory Sacrifice being offer'd for the Sins of the World, God now thought it fit and consistent with the Glory of all his Attributes, and the Ends of Government, to tender Life and Peace to Sinners upon the most equal and reasonable Conditions of the Covenant of Grace.

This is the admirable Temperament and Expedient found out by the Wisdom of God, by which God glorifies his Mercy in the Pardon of Sin, without any Violation of his Justice or Truth, tho he had denounced Death against it. Thus this blessed *Jesus* opened to us the Gates of Paradise, removed the flaming Cherubims, took away the Partition-wall between God and Men, and put us all into a fair capacity of being for ever happy. To him alone do we and all Men owe, that God will now deal with Mankind upon such favourable Conditions, by a new Law suited and accommodated to our Circumstances and Infirmities in this lapsed state; that God upon the account of *Christ's* gracious Undertaking for us is ready and forward to be reconciled with

us, to forgive all that is past, and to make us as blessed as our Natures are capable of: and of this Benefit all that hear of the Gospel do equally partake. For we are not to imagine that our Saviour came into the World upon so little and narrow a Design, as only to rescue and redeem peremptorily and absolutely a few particular Favourites without any Conditions; but he hath put all Men, those especially to whom his Gospel is preached, in a ready and easy way of obtaining Pardon and Salvation. And thus our Redemption, Justification and Salvation, as to the valuable meritorious Causes, depend only on our Saviour. In all this Work we have not the least hand, we have no place nor part. It was not any thing in us, or that can be done by us, that moved God to contrive, or our Saviour to accomplish our Redemption, but only the Pity he had of us in our forlorn miserable Condition.

Here also is the only Comfort and Security of guilty Minds depressed with shame and fear for their Sins: that *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins*: That we are not to stand the brunt of God's Anger or Displeasure our selves, since

since his own Son hath voluntarily offered himself to screen Mankind from the Divine Wrath and Vengeance. And if we do but thoroughly consider how great and sublime a Person he was, we cannot in the least doubt the Prevalency and Success of his appearing for us. We ought not to despair of obtaining any thing from God, fit for him to grant, when we present our selves before him with such a Mediator and Intercessor, in whom he is infinitely well pleased, and *who is able to save to the utmost all that come unto God by him.* Thus this *Jesus* hath saved us from our Sins in the first sense; that is, obtained and purchased the Pardon of them, and made God placable to us.

But this is not all.

2. In order to the Salvation of Sinners, it is farther necessary that Men should be freed from the Power of Sin, and from their evil Natures, and become really good and holy. It is not enough that God should be made willing to forgive our Sins, unless we also are made willing to forsake them. Christ came not to save us from the evil Consequences of our Sins whilst we loved them, and delighted our selves in them. He did not purchase for us an Indulgence, or Licence to sin without

out Punishment: That indeed had been an Employment unworthy of the Son of God, nay an impossible Task to have reconciled God to unhallow'd and impure Minds. The Reformation of the World, the Reparation of our Natures, the purifying our Minds, the implanting the Divine Nature in Men, were as much the design of his Incarnation, as the Vindication of the Divine Justice, to which all the World was obnoxious; and (pardon me if I say it) he is more our Saviour by freeing us from the Dominion of Sin, than from the Penalty. Our blessed Lord had not been so kind and gracious to us, had he obtained Heaven for us (could such a thing possibly have been) whilst we continued impenitent, and utterly unlike to God.

Now there are these two things absolutely necessary for the recovery of Mankind, and making us really happy, Repentance for Sins past, and sincere Obedience for the future; and to effect both these, no means so likely as this appearance of the Son of God in our Nature.

(1.) As for Repentance for Sins past, what in the World can be imagined more effectual for the working in Men an ingenuous Shame and Sorrow for what they
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have done amiss, than these tender offers of God's Pardon and Acceptance upon our submission and returning to a better Mind? We have now all possible assurance given us that Mercy is to be had for the most grievous Offenders. Nothing can exclude or exempt us from this A& of Grace, but only our own wilful and obstinate refusal of Life and Happiness.

All Men are in the condition of the prodigal Son in the Parable of our Saviour, *Luke 15*. They have gone astray from their Father's House after their own Inventions; promising themselves indeed great Pleasures and full Satisfaction in a licentious riotous course of Life; but soon wearied with such painful Drudgeries, and many woful Disappointments, at last they begin to recollect themselves, to remember that Plenty they had enjoy'd of all goods things in their Father's House, how easily and happily they lived whilst they continued under his mild and gracious Government, and to think of returning thither again: but the sense of their horrid Guile and Unworthiness flying in their Faces, fills them with dismal Fears and anxious Despair, so that they cannot hope for any kind Reception or Entertainment after such an ungrateful Rebellion.

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Now let us suppose this Parable thus continued; that the Father, who was so highly provoked, had nevertheless sent his other Son, who had never offended him, into a far Country, exposed to many Difficulties and Hazards, to seek and find out his lost Brother, to beseech him to be reconciled, to promise him that he should be dealt with as if he had never displeased him. Would not such Condescension and unparallel'd Goodness have melted and dissolved the poor Prodigal's Heart? What Joy would soon have overspread his Face? With what Gladness would he have hearken'd to such an Overture? What haste would he have made home? Could he after this have doubted of his Father's Love and Kindness to him?

This therefore is the greatest Encouragement that can be given to our Repentance, that God hath now by his Son declared himself exorable and placable, more willing to forgive, than we can be to ask it of him; and can we desire Pardon and Peace upon more equal and easie terms? Can any thing be conceived more reasonable, than that before our Sins be forgiven, we should humbly acknowledge our faults, and with full purpose of Heart resolve to do so no more? And, if such Love
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and Kindness of Heaven towards us will not beget some Relenting and Remorse in us, if such powerful Arguments will not prevail with us to grow wise and considerate, it is impossible that any should.

(2.) As for sincere Obedience for the future, without which we can never be accepted by God, nor be made happy; this also our Saviour hath most sufficiently engaged us to; by his Doctrine clearly revealing God's Mind and Will to us, setting before us his own most excellent Example, promising us all needful Help and Assistance, and propounding eternal Rewards and Punishments as the Motives of our Obedience.

1. He hath clearly revealed to us God's Nature, and his whole Mind and Will concerning our Salvation. He came into the World a Preacher of Righteousness, plainly to instruct Mankind in all their Duty towards God, themselves, and one another. He freed Men from the intolerable Yoke of many burdensome and costly Ceremonies, and brought in a rational Service, an everlasting Righteousness, consisting in Purity, Humility and Charity; all his Commands being such as are most becoming God to require, and most reasonable for us to perform. They

are most agreeable to our best Understandings, perfective of our Natures, fitted to our Necessities and Capacities, the best provision that can be made for the Peace of our Minds, Quiet of our Lives, and mutual Happiness even in this World: they are easie and benign, humane and merciful Institutions, and all his Laws such as we should chuse to govern our selves by, were we but true to our selves, and faithful to our own Interest. He hath not denied us the Use or Enjoyment of any thing but what is really evil and hurtful to us; he hath considered our Infirmitie and manifold Temptations, maketh allowances for our Wanderings and daily Failings, and accepteth of Sincerity instead of absolute Perfection; so that the Advantages and Excellency of his Laws are as great an Argument to oblige us to the Observance of them, as the Divine Authority by which they were enacted.

Our Saviour propounded himself an Example of all that he required of us, the better to direct us in our Duty, and to encourage us to the performance of it; since nothing is expected from us, but what the Son of God himself was pleased to submit unto. He conversed therefore publicly in the World, in most Instances that

that occur in human Life; giving us a Pattern of an innocent and useful Conversation, thereby to recommend his Religion to us, and to oblige us to tread in his steps, and to follow him as the Leader and great Captain of our Salvation.

3. He hath promised, and doth continually afford the mighty Assistances of his holy Spirit to all those who humbly beg it of him, to strengthen them in every good Work, and to join with, and second their faithful Endeavours. He will never fail an honest Mind, nay he doth first strive with Men, prevent and surprize them by his good Motions and Suggestions. He doth not slight any weak Attempts, but cherisheth the very first beginnings of Virtue and Goodness. He doth not forsake us at our first refusal, but still stands at the Door knocking, waiting our Amendment. He is always ready at hand to help and succour us under all Temptations or Discouragements that we may meet with in our Christian Course. He hath appointed many excellent Means of Grace, and even to this day hath continued his Ministers and Ambassadors in the World to beseech Men in his Name to be reconciled to God.

4. He hath engaged us to the doing of God's Will by most Glorious Rewards, even Everlasting Pleasures and immortal Happiness, *such as Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor could it ever enter into the Heart of Man to conceive.* And still farther, that no means might be omitted likely to work upon reasonable Creatures, he hath denounced most severe Threatnings against all those who refuse to comply with his Gracious Offers, even Eternal Flames, remediless Torments and Miseries; and that they shall be doomed for ever to the Company, and partake of the Fate of Devils and Infernal Fiends. Thus our Blessed Lord hath propounded the most proper Object of Fear to keep Men from Sin, and also presented the most desirable Object of Hope to encourage Men to be good.

And to give us the greatest assurance of all this that we can possibly desire, He hath confirmed and established his Doctrine, not only by those undoubted Miracles which He wrought, and Sufferings He underwent in attestation to its Truth and Divinity, but also by his own Resurrection from the Dead, and visible Ascension into Heaven; where in our Nature He hath taken Possession of that Eternal Joy which He purchased for us, and li-

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veth for ever at God's Right Hand to intercede for us, to protect and rule his Church, to distribute his Gifts and Graces, to subdue all our Enemies, and at last to instate all his True Disciples in the same Glory and eternal Life He is now possessed of; and so to become their compleat Saviour.

All this is a very imperfect Description of but a little part of what our Saviour hath really done towards the Reformation and Amendment of Sinners: for indeed there is nothing that could have been done towards the Salvation of Men which this *Jesus* hath not done for us: And I believe all the World may be challenged to name any one Help, Motive or Encouragement to the Love and Service of God, that is suted to the Nature of God, of Man, and of Religion, which is not afforded to us by this Appearance of the Son of God in our Nature to mediate for us. By the Gospel it is therefore that *Christ* saves Sinners, which is therefore called, *Rom. I. 16. The Power of God unto Salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and then to the Greek;* it being most admirably contrived to the end it was designed for, the opening of Mens eyes, and turning them from Dark-

ness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to God.

And this the Holy Scriptures often declare to us, that for this Purpose was the Son of God manifested; that he might destroy the Works of the Devil; might redeem us from our vain Conversation, renew our Minds, and form them over again, and purifie to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. And all that our Saviour did and suffered for us towards the procuring of our Pardon and Peace, will signifie nothing to us, will not be in the least available for our Benefit, unless he first save us from our Sins, by washing and cleansing our Natures, and subduing all our Lusts and inordinate Passions, and making us conformable to his own Image in true Holiness and Righteousness. 'Twill be no Advantage to us that he was born into this World, unless he be formed in our Minds, and we become New Creatures, such as he requires us to be. Now in all this our Saviour deals with Men according to their Natures, as rational, governable Creatures; moves them by Hopes and Fears, draws them with the Cords of a Man, and will have Heaven and Happiness be the Reward of their own virtuous Choice and free Obedience.

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The short of all is this. In the Gospel of *Jesus Christ* (which as at this time he came down from Heaven to reveal to Men) God Almighty out of his infinite Compassion to his degenerate Creatures, hath prescribed such Methods, appointed such Means, given such Examples, Encouragements, Assistances, that nothing can be thought fit and likely to promote the Salvation of all Men, but what his Goodness and Wisdom have therein most abundantly supply'd us with, unless we would have him offer Violence to the Liberty of our Will, and force us to be Virtuous and Happy whether we will or no, which would be to alter our Natures, and make us another sort of Creatures : but such care is taken, such provision is made for our Hapiness, that we have nothing left us but only the power of being miserable, if it be our resolved Mind (notwithstanding all possible Obligations to the contrary) to be so.

If Men will stop their Ears against the Voice of the Charmer, tho he charm never so wisely ; if they will chuse, court and embrace Sin and Ruin ; if the strongest Arguments will not prevail, if the most forcible Engagements will not persuade ; if neither the most Glorious Promises,

misers, nor the severest Threatnings, nor Interest, nor Self-Love, nor any of those Considerations by which Men are swayed in other Affairs, will at all move them in Matters of greatest Moment, they must perish, and that most deservedly and irrecoverably. If after all this Sinners will die, and be damned even as it were in spite of Heaven, maugre all that God or Christ hath done for them, they must e'en thank themselves for it, and are only to charge it upon their own wilful and incurable Folly and base Contempt of such Infinite Love and Kindness. Thus I have briefly shewn you how, or by what Means, the Son of God truly became our *Jesus* or Saviour, by *saving his People from their Sins*.

II. It only remaineth that in a few Words I draw some Conclusions from what I have said.

I. Hence we may learn, that the Honour of the Son of God, as Saviour of the World, is best secured and exalted by an actual Obedience to his Laws; that we ought not to shift off all Duty and Work from our selves upon him alone, leaving it wholly to him to save us if he pleaseth, without any care or trouble of ours, nor
trust

trust to, and rely altogether upon his Righteousness and Obedience, without any of our own; since, as I have shewn you, he must save us from the Power of our Sins, before ever he will save us from the penal Consequences of them. So that the Efficacy of *Christ's* Undertaking for us, and the Necessity of our own personal Righteousness do very well consist together, and each hath its proper Work in obtaining the Pardon of our Sins, and the Favour of God. Our Saviour's Incarnation and perfect Obedience even unto Death, is the sole meritorious Cause of our Acceptance with God, and of our Salvation. He alone purchased those great Benefits for us, made Atonement, paid our Ransom, and procur'd this Covenant of Grace from God, wherein eternal Life is promised to Penitent Sinners. But then these great Advantages are not immediately and absolutely conferr'd upon us, but under certain Qualifications and Conditions of Repentance, Faith, and sincere Obedience; for the performance of which the Holy Spirit is never wanting to sincere Endeavors. We do therefore vilely affront and disgrace our Blessed Lord, when we boldly expect to be saved by him whilst we continue in our Sins. Nay
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we ought to think our selves as much beholden to him for his Doctrine, and the Assistances of his Grace, and the Glorious Promises of the Gospel, by which we are made truly Holy and Righteous, as for his Sufferings and Death, by which he satisfied God's Justice, and purchased the Pardon of our Sins.

2. I shall hence make that Inference of the Apostle, *Heb. 2. 3. How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation?* Hath God so abundantly provided for our Happiness, hath his only Begotten Son done and suffer'd so much for it, and shall we be so sottish and stupid as foolishly to despise it, when it hath been so signally the unwearied Care of Heaven to procure it for us? It is only our own Advantage that is design'd, God projects no private Profit, nor doth any accrue to him from the Salvation of all Mankind. Shall we our selves therefore madly defeat all these Designs of Grace and Goodness towards us by our invincible Resolution to ruin and undo our selves? Did the only begotten Son of God as at this time descend from the Regions of Bliss and Happiness? was he born into this miserable World, and did he humble himself to take our Flesh, that by that means he might
exalt

exalt Mankind, and make us capable of dwelling in the highest Heavens, and all this out of mere Pity and Compassion to our desperate Condition; and shall we think the denying our selves a Lust, or the satisfaction of a forbidden Appetite, or a short-liv'd Pleasure too much for the obtaining the same Glory? Did he live here a poor, mean and contemptible Life, and at last die a shameful Death to merit eternal Life for us; and for the obtaining the same, shall we grudge to live a sober, temperate and honest Life?

Oh how will this Consideration one day aggravate our Torment! What Vexation and Anxiety will it one day create in our Minds, with what Horror and Despair will it fill our guilty Souls? Had God predestinated us from all Eternity to everlasting Misery, so that it had been impossible for us to have avoided our sad Fate; had he never provided a Mediator and Redeemer for us, it would have been a great ease in another World to consider that we could no ways have escaped this Doom. But when we shall reflect upon the Infinite Love and Kindness of God, and how desirous he was that all Men should be saved; when we shall consider the wonderful Pity and Compassion of our Saviour

Saviour in being born and dying for us, and procuring for us such easie Terms of Salvation, and so often by his Spirit moving and exciting us to our Duty, and the care of our Souls; when we shall think of those many Obligations he hath laid upon us, and the wise Methods he hath used for our Recovery and Amendment; and how that nothing was wanting on God's part, but that we might now have been Praising, Blessing and Adoring his Goodness and Wisdom among the Glorified Spirits in the happy Regions of undisturbed Peace and Joy; and yet that we through our own most shameful Neglect (tho often warned to the contrary) are now forced in vain to seek but for a drop of Water to cool the tip of our Tongues: How will this heighten our future Pains, and prove the very Essence of Hell?

Better shall it be in the last Day for *Tyre* and *Sidon*, for *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, places overrun with Lust and Barbarity; for the Nations that sit in Darkness, and never heard of these glad Tidings of a Saviour, than for you to whom this Salvation is come; but you cast it behind your Backs. The fiercest Vengeance, the severest Punishments are reserved for wicked

wicked Christians; and what can we imagine shall be the just Portion of those whom neither the Condescension and Kindness, nor Wounds and Sufferings of the Son of God could persuade; nor yet the Excellency, Easiness and Profitableness of his Commands invite, nor the Promises of unexpressible Rewards allure, nor the Threatnings of eternal Punishment engage to live and be Happy?

In vain therefore do such come hither to celebrate the Memory of *Christ's* Birth. They of all Men who despise this great Salvation, purchased by the Son of God, have no great cause to rejoice this Day; nay, happy had it been for them (who still persist in their Sins, notwithstanding all that *Christ* hath done to save them from them) if this Holy *Jesus* had never been born.

3. Lastly, Let us all improve this present Opportunity to return our most humble Praises and Thanksgivings for so great and unvaluable a Blessing, and to join our Voices, as well as we are able, with those bright *Seraphims*, and that *Heavenly Host* that attended and celebrated *Christ's* Nativity, (when the Heavens proclaimed his Birth with their loud Shouts of Joy) saying, *Glory be to God in the Highest,*

est, on Earth Peace, Good-Will towards Men.

Blessed be God, for ever Blessed be his Holy Name, who hath found out a way for our Deliverance, and hath raised up for us a mighty Salvation; that we being delivered out of the Hands of our Enemies, might serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him, all the Days of our Life. Praise therefore the Lord, O our Souls, and all that is within us praise his Holy Name; and forget not all his Benefits, who forgiveth all our Iniquities, and healeth all our Diseases; who hath redeemed our Life from destruction, and hath crowned us with Loving-kindness and tender Mercies.

What shall we now return, what do we not owe to him, who came down from his Imperial Throne, and infinitely debasing himself, and eclipsing the Brightness of his Glorious Majesty, became a Servant, nay a Curse, for our sakes, to advance our Estate, and to raise us to a Participation of his Divine Nature, and his Eternal Glory and Bliss?

To Him therefore let us now all offer up our selves, our Souls and Bodies and Spirits, and that not only to be saved by Him, but to be ruled and governed by Him; and this he will take as a better expression

pression of our Gratitude, than if we spent never so many Days in verbal Praises and Acknowledgments of his Love and Bounty.

Let us all open our Hearts and Breasts to receive and entertain this great Friend of Mankind, this glorious Lover of our Souls, and suffer him to take full possession of them, and there to place his Throne, and to reign within us without any Rival or Competitor; and let us humbly beg of him, that he would be pleased to finish that Work in us which he came into the World about; that by his Blood he would cleanse and wash us from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit; that he would save us from our Sins here, and then we need not fear his saving us from everlasting Destruction hereafter.

Which God of his Infinite Mercy grant to us all for the alone sake of our Blessed Lord and Redeemer, to whom with the Father, &c.

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180 (190) A
SERMON

Preached on

ASH-WEDNESDAY.

The Tenth Sermon.

St. Mark vi. 12.

*And they went out and preached, that
Men should repent.*

THO Repentance be a Duty never
out of Season, nay is indeed
the Work and Business of our
whole Lives, all of us being obliged e-
very Day to amend; yet there are some
particular Times wherein we are more
especially called upon to review our Adi-
ons, to humble our Souls in God's Presence,
to bewail our manifold Transgressions,
and

and to devote our selves afresh to his Service; such are times of Affliction, either personal or publick, when extraordinary Judgments are abroad in the Earth, or are impendent over us; or when we our selves are visited with any Sicknes or grievous Calamity: so also before we receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we are then more strictly to examine our selves, and renew our Vows and Resolutions of living better. And to name no more, the Church in all Ages hath thought fit to set apart some solemn Times to call upon Men more earnestly to repent, and to seek God's Face before it be too late; such were the Fasting-Days before the Feast of the Resurrection or Easter: and accordingly our Church, as you have heard in the Exhortation this day read to you, doth at this Time especially move us to earnest and true Repentance; that we should return unto our Lord God with all Contrition and meekness of Heart, bewailing and lamenting our sinful Lives, acknowledging and confessing our Offences, and seeking to bring forth worthy Fruits of Penance. And such as now seriously set themselves to repent of all the Sins they have committed, using such Abstinence as is necessary for the sub-

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duing the Flesh to the Spirit, do certainly keep *Lent* far better than they who for so long time only scrupulously abstain from all Flesh, and call filling themselves with the choicest Fish, Sweetmeats and Wine, Fastings.

I shall at this time suppose you sufficiently instructed in the nature of Repentance (it being one of the *first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ*, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* calls it, *chap. 6. 1.*) and also that you will readily acknowledge the indispensable necessity of it, in order to the obtaining the Pardon of your Sins, and eternal Life: and that which I now design, is only to set before you some, if not the main Hinderances and Impediments that keep Men from Repentance, and to endeavour to remove them; and I shall discourse in order of these three, of the many that might be mentioned.

I. Want of Consideration.

II. The unsuccessfulness of some former Attempts; when Men have resolved and begun to reform, but have soon found all their good Purposes and Endeavours blasted and defeated, this discourageth them from making any farther Trials.

III. The

III. The hopes of long Life, and some better opportunity of repenting hereafter.

One of these is commonly the ground and cause of those Mens remaining in an impenitent State, who yet are convinced of the absolute necessity of Repentance in order to their Peace and Happiness.

I. Want of Consideration. For could Men but once be persuaded seriously and in good earnest, as becometh reasonable Creatures, to consider their Ways and Actions, patiently to attend to the Dictates of their own Minds, and soberly to weigh the Reasons and Consequences of Things, there is no doubt to be made but Religion would every day gain more Proselytes, Virtue and Righteousness would prosper and flourish more in the World, and Men would soon become ashamed and afraid of nothing so much as Vice and Wickedness. Of such infinite moment are the matters of Religion, so mighty and strong are the Arguments which it propounds to us, so clear and convincing are the Evidences it gives us of its truth and certainty; so agreeable to our Minds are all its Principles, so

amiable and excellent its Precepts, so pleasant and advantageous is the Practice of them, that there seemeth nothing farther required to make all Men in love with it, but only that they would open their Eyes to behold its Beauty, that they would not stop their Ears against all its most alluring Charms.

Let Men but once thoroughly ponder the Folly and Mischief of Sin, with the Benefits and Rewards of Piety and a holy Life; let them but compare their several Interests together, and look sometimes beyond things present, to the state wherein they are to live for ever, and use their Understandings about these Matters as they do about other Affairs, and it is impossible they should enjoy any tolerable Peace or Ease without a careful and strict Provision for another World. Vice oweth its quiet possession of Mens Minds only to their Stupidity and Inadvertency, to their Carelessness and Inconsideration: it reigns undisturbedly only in ignorant, secure, unthinking Spirits, but straight loseth all its Force and Power when once Men begin to look about them, and bethink themselves what they are doing, and whither they are going. Could we but once gain thus much of wicked Men,

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to make a stand, and pause a little, and to cease but a while from the violent pursuit of their Pleasures, and fairly reflect upon their Lives, and see what is the fruit of their past Follies, and consider the End and Issue of these things; could we, I say, but obtain thus much, we might spare most of our Pains spent in persuading them to repent, their own Thoughts would never suffer them to be in quiet till they had done it. Let us but once begin to deliberate and examine, and we are sure on which side the Advantage will lie: Sin and Wickedness can never stand a Trial, let our own Reasons be but Judges; it hates nothing so much as to be brought to the Light. A vicious Man, however he may brave it in the World, yet can never justify or approve himself to his own free Thoughts; and however he may plead for Sin before others, yet he can never answer the Objections his own Conscience would bring against it, would he but once dare impartially to consider them.

But the misery of wicked Men is, that they industriously banish all such troublesome Guests out of their Minds; instead of debating with themselves the reasonableness and fitness of any of their Actions,

they will not endure so much as to hold any Parly or Discourse with themselves; they endeavour either by a constant succession of sensual Delights to charm and lull asleep, or else by a counter-noise of Revellings and riotous Excesses to drown the softer Whispers of their Consciences; or else the hurry and tumult of this World, multiplicity of Business and secular Affairs, temporal Projects and Designs, and bodily Concerns, do so wholly engross and prepossess their Thoughts, that they are not at leisure for any such serious Reflections. They chuse to divert themselves by any Folly or Vanity, by which they may stifle and choak all such good Motions; they hate nothing so much as being alone, or at a distance from their dear Companions in Sin, for fear lest some affrighting Apprehensions should steal or force their way in; till at last they come to inherit the Portion of Fools; that is, for ever lament and curse their own Incogitance and Indiscretion.

Now till wicked Men enter into such deep and earnest Consideration of themselves and their own Estates, it is impossible that the Means of Grace, the Calls of the Gospel, or the Motions of God's Spirit, should have any Force or Efficacy upon

upon them; as that a Man's Body should be nourished by Meat that he doth not digest, or that a Medicine put into a Man's Pocket should preserve his Health. The most invincible Arguments cannot gain Assent till they first obtain Attention; and it is all one to be wholly ignorant of, or not to consider the Danger we are in: and therefore the ordinary way by which God brings such Men to Repentance, is first by some sudden Affliction or affrighting Providence, to awaken and rouse them up to a serious Consideration of their evil Ways, and desperate Condition, which by degrees may improve into a hearty Contrition, and thorough Reformation.

And O that I could now prevail with any one that hath hitherto liv'd in Ease, in a course of Disobedience to God's Laws, to go home and diligently consider with himself, and count up what he hath got by all his most beloved Sins, what a dreadful and manifest Danger he runs, how sad and dismal his Reckoning one day must needs be; how inexcusable he is in his Folly, how short the Pleasures of Sin are, and how sore the Punishments, and that it is yet, through God's Grace, possible for him to escape them: and these
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and such like Thoughts for a while cherished, would surely beget Relentings, or at least Resolutions of Repentance and Amendment: and if we would do thus frequently, if we would daily set our selves to this Work, we should be more and more confirmed in such good Purposes.

It is much to be hoped, that none of us here present, who shew so much respect to Religion, as to join in the solemn Worship of God, are so far hardened in Sin, but that we have some lucid Intervals, some sober Moods, wherein we give our Consciences leave to speak to, and admonish us. An uneasie Bed, a broken Sleep, will ever and anon bring these things to your Remembrance: O do not straight fly from them, nor thrust them out of your Minds; nay, be not contented only to give them a fair hearing, but never leave thinking of them, and revolving them over in your Minds, till they have transformed you into new Creatures.

For if you will not consider these things now, let me tell you, the time will surely shortly come, when you shall consider them whether you will or no; when your Sins shall set themselves in order before you,

you, and it shall not be in your power to forget them, or to divert your Thoughts from those things which you are now so loth to think upon. Here indeed in this Life the Thoughts of God and a future State often present and offer themselves to us, they often spring up in our Minds, and when expelled, recur again; but Men find out several Ways and Artifices whereby to hinder their fixing or abiding upon their Spirits, or at all influencing their Lives: but the time will come when we shall be forced to bring our evil Ways to remembrance, and yet then Consideration will do us no good, nor serve to any other purpose, but only to aggravate our Misery, and double our Torment. This is the first most general Hindrance of Repentance, Want of Consideration.

II. Another Hindrance of Repentance is the Unsuccessfulness of some former Attempts; for when Men have resolved, and perhaps begun to reform, but have soon found all their good Purposes and Endeavours blasted and defeated, they are apt to be thereby discouraged from making any farther Trials. They have long had it in the Purpose of their Hearts

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to leave their Sins, nay sometimes they have prevailed against them for some time, and withstood some fair Temptations; but yet at last Nature did, they know not how, return, and they have been persuaded to renew their old Acquaintance with those Sins which they had once forsaken: and in their Conflicts with Sin they have been so often foiled, that they now despair of ever getting the Day; should they once again resolve to enter upon a new Course of Life, they fear they should only add to the number of their Offences, the Breach of this Vow, as they have already of many others which they formerly made.

This is the Condition of many Men in the World, and a very dangerous one it is; they have not yet sinn'd themselves past all Sense or Feeling, but have some Regrets and frequent Remorses: and when their Spirits are at any time disturbed with the sense of their Guilt, they then bethink themselves seriously of returning to a better Mind, resolve upon a new Life, and that presently too, and perform some Duties in order to it, and are for a little time more careful and watchful over themselves, and their Ways; but they are soon disheartned, *their*

Goodness

Goodness is but like a morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it passeth away; they are soon again easily frightened or tempted from their Duty; upon a little Discouragement that they meet with, they repent themselves of their good Choice, and forget their virtuous Resolutions; and, which is worst of all, this they often do, they often resolve to begin, and as often neglect to perform what they promised: and thus they continue running an endless wearisom Circle, of sinning, and then resolving against it, and then upon the next inviting Opportunity sinning again; till at last, when they have found so many Trials and Essays prove fruitless and unsuccessful, and their good Purposes so often over-power'd, they e'en sit down contented Slaves to their Vices and Lusts.

But notwithstanding all this, what I have now represented to you, ought not in the least to discourage your Endeavours of Amendment, but should rather engage you to greater Deliberation, Circumspection and Caution in your proceeding in it. That your good Purposes have so often proved ineffectual, is not a Reason for not resolving again, but only for not doing it rashly, inconsiderately,
and

and by halves. The Fault is certainly your own, that you have so frequently failed and come short; it was not from any Defect on God's part, in not affording you sufficient Grace, but you were some way plainly wanting and unfaithful to your selves. And the Miscarriage of former Trials only admonisheth you to begin again with greater Care, Courage and Sincerity.

I shall therefore briefly mention to you the chief Conditions or Qualifications of such a Resolution as is like to hold out against all Temptations and Opposition, by which we may also see how it comes to pass that Mens good Purposes do so often prove abortive.

I. If we would resolve effectually, we must take care to found our good Purposes upon such Reasons and Arguments as are universal, and oblige us to a thorow Change, and hold indifferently for all Places, Circumstances and Conditions. Our pious Resolutions must not be made upon any contingent particular Reasons, which may soon chance to cease, and when they do, we shall be in manifest danger of returning back to our old Courses: for instance, Suppose any one to be surpris'd in a base and unworthy Action,

Action, and to have endured the Shame and Punishment of it, and upon these Accounts to resolve with himself, that he will never be guilty of the same again; but afterwards it happens that this Man meets with such a Temptation to that Sin, as that he may be confident of committing it with Privacy and Safety; judge you, whether, if he be not furnished with other Arguments, he will not certainly fall into the Snare, and break all his former Vows to the contrary. And this is the case of all those who resolve for the Practice of Religion, for some particular Convenience, or to avoid some present Evil, such as loss of Credit, Trade or Gain, to preserve their Health, to oblige their Relations, to please their Superiours, or the like: for these at the best are but slight and mean Arguments for Religion, and they commonly hold against some Sins only; and Circumstances may easily be so changed, that they may become no Reasons or Arguments at all.

Thus one Man resolves to live well, because he finds he shall not live long; but a good Air, temperate Diet, and wholesome Physick alter the State of his Body and Mind both together: and so the
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intemperate Person; when he hath filled and stretch'd his Vessels with Wine to their utmost Capacity, and is grown weary and sick, and feels those Qualms and Disturbances that usually attend such Excesses, resolves then, that he will hereafter contain himself within the Bounds of Sobriety; till within a little while he recovers his former Debauch, and is well again, and then his Appetite returns, and his Company invites, and he forgets both the Trouble that his Sin created, and the Promises that he made against it.

But now he that would resolve for Repentance and Amendment successfully, must do it upon such grounds as these; namely, the evil and baseness of Sin it self, and the Excellency of Virtue and Goodness, out of the sense of his Subjection to his Maker, and the Worth and Value of his own immortal Soul; out of Gratitude to God and our blessed Saviour, who hath done and suffered so much for us; out of a full belief of God's continual Presence with us, and Inspection over us, and the strict Account he will one day call us to; out of Fear of the vexations of a disturbed Conscience, and those eternal Miseries that wait all impenitent Sinners; and out of hopes of that Glory and Happiness;

ness, which shall be the Reward of well-doing: for these Reasons will at all times serve to stablish and confirm our virtuous Resolutions; they will always hold good, as long as Men are in their Wits; they are sufficient to answer every Temptation, and oblige equally against all Sin, in all Places, and upon all Occasions.

2. Let our Resolutions be made upon the maturest and most deliberate Consideration of all things that can occur to our Thoughts: A hasty sudden Vow is soon forgot, and this is one great reason why Mens good Purposes so often fail; namely, that when they are serious and devout, or scar'd, they then in the general, and in gross resolve for the future to live well and religiously: when yet, alas! they know not what is meant by it; and so when they come to be tried in any particular part of Religion, this they never thought of before, nor did they ever intend to oblige themselves to it.

Before therefore thou engagest thy self, consider well all Circumstances, and the several Instances of Religion; what thou must part with, what Companies thou must forsake, what Friendship and Acquaintance thou must renounce, what

Pleasures and Profits thou must deny thy self, what strict Duty and Service will be required of thee; and then most seriously examin thy self, Can I march through all these Inconveniencies, and overcome all the Difficulties and Temptations that may or can befall me in this new Enterprize? Consult thy Judgment, Affections and Inclinations, and make thy Determination upon every particular, and be always as jealous and suspicious of thy self as possibly thou canst, always remembering that vast difference there is between things as they are only represented to us by our Fancies, and when they become actually and sensibly present to us: This I must do, that I must avoid; I must never gratify this Lust, no not once more, whatever Opportunity, Provocation or Desire I may have to it; I must hold to this Practice, not only this Day, not only at some certain Times and Seasons, but constantly throughout the whole course of my Life. Shall I not soon grow weary of such strictness? All my worldly Affairs, all my fleshly Pleasures must give place to this Resolution; and can my Heart fully, without any reserve, consent to such a universal alteration? How many will this Change offend? How many

ny Flouts and Jeers must I expose my self to by this Repentance? How shall I answer such an old Acquaintance when he invites me to an intemperate Cup? Can I now wholly abstain from what I have so long allowed my self in?

Thus consider all things well and thoroughly in thy Mind before thou dost resolve, that it may be the deliberate Act of the whole Man, that thy Understanding may perfectly approve of it, being fully convinced of its Reasonableness; that thy Will may wholly consent to it, that all thy Affections may yield up themselves and submit to it, so that nothing that can befall thee afterwards may be able to stagger thee, because it was not foreseen, or make thee doubt of the Wisdom of thy Choice.

3. Renew these thy good Purposes often, every day, yea many times every day, at least whilst they are fresh, and thou art just beginning thy Repentance; frequently propound the same things to thy Thoughts and Judgment, that thou mayst see it is not any particular Heat or Fancy that forms thy Resolution.

For this is another ordinary Cause why some Mens good Resolutions do not hold out, namely, because they are the accidental Effect of some passionate Commotion

tion within them, of some Fright or Disturbance, rather than their deliberate Judgment; they depend upon some present Heat, good Mood or Pang of Devotion, which lasts not long upon them, and so consequently their Resolutions have but little Force and Efficacy. There are some Men of that facile Temper, that they are wrought upon by every Object they converse with, whom any affectionate Discourse, or serious Sermon, or any notable accident, shall put into a fit of Religion, which yet usually lasts no longer, than till somewhat else comes in their way, and blots out those Impressions: and these Men are good or bad as it happens; for it is not likely that Men of such volatile loose Tempers should make any lasting Resolutions, either in matters of Religion, or even in any other Instances whatever.

Ask your self therefore the next day, whether you are still of the same Mind; after some Intermiſſion put the Cause again to examination, after that thy Mind hath been diverted by other Matters, and thy Thoughts employed in other Affairs, so that the Warmth of thy first Imagination is now over; try then whether thou approveſt of the same things: Doth not
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thy Heart begin to stumble, and draw back, and shrink from the Undertaking? Dost thou not begin to think of some Instance of thy Duty wherein thou desirest to be excused, or some Sin which thou wouldst fain have excepted? Dost thou not hanker after a greater Liberty in some things? If not, I know no better Sign in the World of a good Resolution, and such as is like to hold out than this, when we keep the same Mind in our different Tempers, and several States of Life. And think not all this Care too much, or too troublesome, since it is necessary only for a while, till we are well settled and confirmed in this Change, or new Life. Try thy self when thou art sound and in Health, as well as when under a Fit of the Stone or Gout; when thou art merry and brisk, as well as when thou art sad and melancholy: and if thou still find'st reason to persist in the same Resolution, thou mayst do well, the more to fix thy self, to back it with a solemn Vow and Protestation to Almighty God, that by his Grace thou wilt keep firm and stedfast to it to the end of thy Life. And it hath been farther advised, that we should commit this to Writing, keep it safe by us as our Act and Deed, by which we have devoted and given up

our selves to God, and often read it over, and examine our Faithfulness to it, as that which shall one day be produced against us to our everlasting Confusion, if we do not discharge and satisfy it. Let us also take the first occasion to renew and confirm these Vows and Resolutions at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; there again bind thy self to perform all that thou hast promised; there by that sacred Body and Blood thou commemoratest, oblige thy self never to start wilfully from God's Service, whatever Difficulties thou mayst encounter with, what Temptations soever thou mayst have to forsake it; and surely this, if any thing, is sufficient to make us constant as long as any sense of God or Christ remains in our Minds.

4. Make known this thy good Resolution to the World, be not ashamed to own this change to other Persons, as fit occasions may be offered: let them know that thy Mind is now altered, that thou art not the same Person thou wert before, that they are much mistaken if they expect the same Discourse, the same Compliances, the same Practices from thee as before; that thou art now resolved to serve thy Lord and Master even unto Death, and never for the World to do any thing that
doth

doth displease him ; that by the help of God thou hast fully determined, never to be any more false to thy Christian Profession ; and that thou dost glory in this thy unfeigned Resolution.

This will hinder others from tempting thee, and make them see it is in vain any more to assault or trouble thee ; nay, it will be a mighty Confirmation and Security to thee, for then thou wilt have this great Argument to continue true to this Promise and Engagement, lest by breaking it, thou shouldst most justly become a Sport and Mock to those to whom thou hast made it known, and they should say of thee, as our Saviour saith of the foolish Builder, *Behold this Man began to build, but was not able to finish.*

5. Having fixed so good a purpose of Mind, fail not to apply your self to the diligent conscientious use of all those Means of Grace which God hath prescribed and appointed for the vanquishing of Sin, and for the obtaining Virtue and Goodness. Many Men suppose they have done enough, when they have once brought their Minds to a Resolution, tho they then never think more of it ; they think there is Piety and Security sufficient in resolving for the end, tho they

never consider nor concern themselves about the Means ; they look upon a good Resolution as a kind of holy Charm, and if they do but intend to mend their Lives, they reckon their Lives will mend alone, without any farther Pain or Trouble.

But such had best try first what Money they can get by only resolving to be rich, without taking any pains for it ; or let them see whether Learning will come of it self, without any reading or study, to a Man that only resolves to be learned.

Nothing hath done more mischief in the World, hath made Christians more lazy and secure, or given greater occasion to that prevailing *Religion* without *Virtue* amongst us, than this one Principle, that we are converted (as 'tis usually called) by those Operations of God's Spirit, wherein we are wholly passive ; so that it is in vain to strive, contend and labour for the making our selves Holy, as we must do for the attaining of any other Perfections and Accomplishments, since the Habits of all Goodness are supernaturally infused into us. But this is all but fancy and idle talk, for the Spirit of God works not now a days, but according to the Methods of Reason and Discourse, assisting us whilst we sincerely use such moral Means

as Religion teaches, or Reason prescribes, and that with as much Diligence, Vigour and Constancy, as if we had no Assistance at all, but were wholly left to our selves : so that the way to recover our selves to a Christian Temper of Mind after a vitious Course of Life, is in truth the very same by which a man recovers his Health after a long Disease, *viz.* by God's Blessing upon the diligent Use of fit Means; and any other way is no more now to be expected than Prophecy or Miracles.

The Reformation of an habitual Sinner is a Work of time and patience; evil Customs must be mastered and subdued by degrees; and we must be forced to destine particular times, and to use particular proper Means for the gaining of the several Graces required in a Christian: we must first encounter one Vice or Lust, then another; and after we have done our best, yet perhaps a Temptation may surprize us unawares, and we may fall again into the Mire even after we have washed our selves in some measure, and so create our selves new Work and greater Trouble: we must expect sometimes to come off by the worst, before we obtain the final Conquest; and our Lusts, after they have been routed, may perchance rally, and make head again. We

We must not therefore be presently discouraged, or faint and grow weary in these our Conflicts with Sin and Vice ; for if we can but bear undauntedly the first Shock, and stand out the first Assaults, the Force of our Enemies will sensibly decline, we shall every day gain ground, the Work will grow much easier upon our Hands ; and the means of Grace, if we are but constant and unwearied in the Use of them, will never fail of Success.

6. Lastly, Let us always second our good Resolutions with devout Prayers for the Aids of God's Holy Spirit to strengthen us in this our Undertaking ; to animate us with Patience and Courage ; to fight for us, and with us, against all the Enemies of our Souls ; that he would furnish us with an inward Power in our Minds, whereby our evil Inclinations may be changed ; and that by the strength of his Grace we may be freed from those ill Impressions that formerly subdued us.

For by this means God is not only made an Assistant, but a Witness and a Party, and our Resolutions come near to the nature of a Vow ; by this we daily oblige our selves afresh to God, and renew our Resolutions ; this adds the greatest Strength and Solemnity to them : and tho

tho they were at first begun upon too slight Considerations, or too suddenly or weakly made, yet when once we seriously make God concerned in them, they will then become firm and strong. And indeed he that finds in himself no Mind to pray to God for his Assistance, his Resolutions, be they what they will, are certainly vain; his Neglect to implore God's Aid, is a sure Sign that he hath no Mind to keep them.

Often therefore prostrate your selves at his Footstool, beseech him not to despise the day of small things, not to quench the smoking Flax, nor to break the bruised Reed; that he would be pleased to bless and prosper these Beginnings and first Attempts towards a new Life: profess your Dependence upon his Help and Assistance, and beg of him most earnestly never to leave you, nor forsake you.

And if thus resolved, thus trusting upon God's Grace, thus diligent in the Use of all due Means, we yet fail of overcoming our Sins and Lusts; I shall then readily confess, that there is but little heed to be given to the Promises of the Gospel, that our Misery is unavoidable, and that God hath not provided a sufficient Remedy for Sinners: but therefore

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it is only that we so often fall short, and find Temptations too hard for all our good Purposes, because we resolve but by halves, and unadvisedly ; we resolve we know not what, we do it rashly or fillily, or humourfomly, upon no Reasons, or none that will hold. This is the second Hindrance of Mens Repentance, the unsuccessfulness of former Resolutions, which ought to be laid only at our own Door, and charged upon our selves as our own Fault.

III. Another great Hindrance of Mens Repentance is the Hope of long Life, and better opportunity of repenting hereafter. And indeed of all the Devil's Artifices to keep Men off from amending their Lives, this is that which prevails most, and with most Men ; they content themselves with a Repentance in reversion, and continually postpone this one thing necessary. After this or that Business is dispatched, this or that Lust satisfied, this or that Turn served, when their Bodies are as infirm as their Souls, then they will take care of both together. If thou lookst abroad into the World, you will find this is that by which chiefly wicked Men maintain the Quiet and Peace of their Minds ; for they cannot endure to think of passing out of
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this Life, and appearing before God in an impenitent State: but their full Purpose is to do something, some time or other, they cannot well tell what nor when, by which they hope to make some Amendments for all their former Follies and Miscarriages.

This therefore is our most difficult Task, not so much to persuade Men of the necessity of Repentance, as to prevail with them unalterably to fix a time when this Change shall begin, and the care of Religion take place: we find it most hard to convince them that it is necessary now at this very present to set about it: we are thought a little too hot and hasty, when we press wicked Men to leave their Sins *to Day, even whilst it is called to Day*, as long as they have so much time before them to do it in. This is the most fatal Cheat Men put upon themselves; so that I doubt not to say, that the Infernal Regions of Darkness and Despair are not crowded by any sort of Persons so much as by those who fully designed and intended to have repented before they died.

It were easy now at large to shew the infinite unreasonableness and danger of such Delay; but I shall content my self with propounding to you these two Considerations.

I. That

1. That if we be unwilling to repent now, it is not likely that we shall be more willing at any other time.

2. That if we think our selves not able to do it now, we shall be less able hereafter.

(1.) If we be unwilling to repent and amend now, it is not likely that we shall be more willing or inclined to it at any other time: for the same Reason that makes any Man defer it now, will be as forcible and prevalent at another time. Since the Man hath found no great Inconvenience from the Sins of the last Week or Month, he sees not why he may not as well venture on them for another, and after that he says he will certainly become a new Man; but when that time comes, yet still God continues his Patience, and is not weary of bearing with him, so that he'll think he may still venture to put it off once more, and then he will not fail to perform his good Intentions of amending his Life.

And this is most probably the Consequence of such vain Purposes of leaving our Sins hereafter; for the only Objection we have against doing it now, is because this time is present, and we are loth as yet to put our selves to so much trouble
and

and pain as this work doth require ; and therefore when to Morrow is as this Day, and comes to be present too, we shall for the same Reason for which we defer it till then, put it off still to another Day ; and so it will be always a Day or more to that Day when we shall begin to repent.

So that this ought rather to be called a full Purpose of committing Sin to day, than a Resolution of leaving it to morrow. He that resolves to be virtuous, but not till some time hereafter, resolves against being virtuous in the mean time ; and as Virtue at such a Distance is easily resolved on, so it is as easie a matter always to keep it at that distance : the next Week, says the Sinner, I will begin to be sober and temperate, serious and devout ; but the true sense of what he says, is this, I am fully bent to spend this present Week in Riot and Excess, in Sensuality and Profaneness, or whatever Vice it is that I indulge my self in ; and if we do thus often, if it be our common course to put off our Repentance thus from time to time, this is a most shrewd Sign that indeed we never intend to repent at all : This is only a pitiful Device and Excuse to shift off the Duty wholly ; and so we should interpret it in any Man who should deal

deal with us after the same manner in our worldly Affairs.

It is with wicked Men in this case, as it is with a Bankrupt : when his Creditors are loud and clamorous, speak big and threaten high, he giveth them many good Words and fair Promises, appoints them to come another day, entreats their Patience but a little longer, and then he will satisfy them all ; when yet the Man really intends not to pay one Farthing, nor ever thinks of compassing the Money against the time. Thus do Men endeavour to pacify and quiet their Consciences, by telling them they will hear them another time ; but this is only to delude and cheat their Consciences with good Words, and specious Pretences, making them believe, they will certainly do, what yet they cannot endure to think of, and what they would fain wholly excuse themselves from ; but yet this is not all : for

(2.) We shall be less able to repent, and more indisposed for the Work at another time than we are now. That which makes Men so loth to be brought to reflect upon their Lives past, is (as I before observed) the uneasiness and trouble they think they shall find in such a Work : so

a great Trader, that hath good reason to think he is run much behind-hand in the World, of all things hates to look into his Books, cannot endure to hear of stating his Accounts ; and yet the longer he defers this, his Accounts will become more intricate, he'll still run more in Debt, his Condition will every day grow worse and worse, till at last 'tis past all Recovery. And thus it is with wicked Men, they would fain defer their Repentance as long as ever they can, they would not yet be interrupted with such grave and serious Thoughts : but the mischief is, the longer they defer it, the more they have still to repent of ; and not only so, but they become more unable and unfit for such a Work ; they are still more backward and averse, as having been longer used and accustomed to their Sins, and as having contracted greater Familiarity with, and kindness for them : and by such delay their ill habits grow more confirm'd, their Lusts and Passions become stronger and more potent, and even their very natural Powers and Faculties are by degrees weakened and disabled.

And for this Reason, the sooner we begin a religious course of Life, the more

ease it will prove to us, not only because in the time of Youth we are most capable of any Impressions, our Natures being then most soft and tender, but also because if we begin betimes, there is so much the less Change to be made in our Lives and Tempers; our Repentance then is like a Man's returning into the right Road as soon as ever he was out of his Way, he hath but a few Paces to go back.

You therefore who have not yet lost all your natural Modesty, who yet blush at your Vices, whose Hearts are not yet hardned in Sin, would you but presently without any delay, apply your selves to the Service of God, and Practice of Religion, what abundance of care and trouble might you save your selves? How many sad days and sorrowful nights might you prevent? It is in your power now upon easie terms to become good and virtuous; and the sooner you begin, the less Sorrow, the less Self-denial, the less Pains will suffice.

Now therefore, even this very day, let us fet about it, and he that hath done wickedly, let him not dare to do the same so much as once more; let us resolve never to have any Parley with our Lusts, but to make some considerable Progress

gress in our Repentance, before ever we give sleep to our Eyes, or slumber to our Eyelids; let not any worldly Business, or the Cares of this Life, or even our necessary Employments, much less sinful and vain Pleasures, stifle or choak any good Thoughts or Resolutions that, during this Exercise, may be raised in our Minds: we have trifled too long already about a matter of such infinite moment, it is perfect madness to dally any longer, when our Souls, which are ten thousand times more worth than our Lives, are at stake. If we begin this very moment, God knows, we begin late enough, and who knows but to morrow will be too late? had we been wise, we should have begun sooner.

A long and eternal Adieu therefore (let us every one say) to all the unlawful bewitching Pleasures of this World; I will no longer be fooled or imposed upon by them, nor one day more live in such a State as I shall be afraid to die in: from this hour I change my Service, I now lay myself down at the Feet of my Blessed Master; without any farther disparaging the case, I will immediatly begin my Journey to my Father's house; I will as soon defer eating, drinking or sleeping,

as delay to secure my everlasting Salvation, to become sound and healthful, to be at ease and in Peace, to be safe and happy.

And for our encouragement to this, I shall only, for the conclusion of all, add, that however great and heinous our Sins have been, yet we cannot be more ready to ask, than God is to grant us our Pardon; we cannot be more forward to return, than he is to receive us into his Embraces. And because we know our selves obnoxious to his severe Justice, and that he is a God of Truth and Faithfulness, as well as of Mercy and Compassion, and that he hateth Sin with a perfect hatred; therefore that we might not have the least suspicion remaining in us of his unwillingness to forgive such high Provocations and Offences as we may have been guilty of, he hath been pleased to send his only begotten Son into the World, to lay down his Life a Ransom for us, to stand between us and God's Justice, and by his dismal sufferings and cursed Death to expiate our Offences: so that we have not only the infinite Goodness of the Divine Nature to trust to, but the Virtue and Efficacy of that Sacrifice which the Son of God made of himself, to plead for our Forgiveness,

upon

upon our Repentance and Amendment.

Nor was our blessed Saviour only our Propitiation to die for us, and procure our Atonement, but he is still our Advocate, continually interceding with his Father in the behalf of all true Penitents, and suing out their pardon for them in the Court of Heaven: *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, who deprecates Anger, mitigates Wrath; and not only barely intercedes for us, but with Authority demands the release of his Captives, redeemed by his Blood, by virtue of God's Promise and Covenant.

And in order to the sufficient Promulgation of this his gracious willingness to forgive us upon our Repentance, God hath provided and appointed an Order of Men, to last as long as the World doth, to propound to Men this blessed Overture, and in God's Name to beseech Men to be reconciled to him.

Nay, God condescends to prevent the worst of Men, by manifold Blessings and Favours, daily obliging them by his Grace and Spirit, and several Providences towards them; moving, affecting and awakening the most grievous Offenders to a timely consideration of their ways. Tho

highly provoked, he yet begins first with us, so desirous is he of our Welfare.

He hath not only outwardly proclaimed Pardon to all that will submit, and sent his own Son on this Message of Peace, but inwardly, by his Spirit and Grace, he solicites Men to comply with it, even where it is resisted and despised; he forsaketh not Men at their first denial, he giveth them time to bethink and recollect themselves; he doth not lie at the catch, nor take present advantage against us, but with infinite Patience waits to be gracious to us, hoping at last we shall be of a better mind: he doth not soon despair of Mens Conversion and Reformation, he yet extends his Grace towards those who abuse it, and offers his Pardon to those who slight it: Nothing is more highly pleasing and acceptable to him, than for a Sinner to return from the evil of his ways; nay, which is more yet, he is not only, upon our Repentance, ready to overlook all that is past, but he hath promised to reward our future Obedience with eternal Life, so that we shall not only upon our Repentance be freed from those dismal Punishments which we had rendered our selves liable to, but likewise receive from God such a glorious Recompence,

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as is beyond all our Conception or Imagination. Now if such love and kindness of Heaven towards us will not beget some relentings and remorse in us, if such powerful Arguments will not prevail with us to grow wise and considerate, it is impossible any should.

Let us all therefore smite upon our Breasts, and say, O Lord, we are highly sensible of our Folly, of our Unworthiness and foul Ingratitude; for we have sinned against thee, and done evil in thy sight, and are no more worthy to be called thy Children: but we have heard that the great King of the World is a most merciful King, that he delights not in the death of Sinners, but had rather they should repent and live: we cannot longer withstand or oppose such unspeakable Goodness, we are overcome by such wonderful Kindness and Condescension, we resign up our selves wholly to the Conduct of his good Spirit, and will never withdraw or alienate our selves from him any more; we will now become God's true and loyal Subjects, and continue such as long as we breath, nor shall any thing in the World be able to shake or corrupt our Faith and Allegiance to him.

What Punishment can be too sore, what State black and dismal enough for those who contemn all these Offers and Kindnesses of Heaven, who will not by any means be won to look after and have Mercy upon themselves, to consult their own Interest and Welfare? What Pity can they expect, who obstinately chuse to be miserable, in despite of all the Goodness of God, and Grace of the Gospel?

The Lord grant, that we may all in this our Day, know and mind the things that belong to our everlasting Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes.

The

The Eleventh Sermon.

I Cor. xv. 35.

But some Man will say, How are the Dead raised up? And with what Body do they come?

THE Apostle having in the beginning of this Chapter most firmly established the truth and reality of our Saviour's Resurrection, v. 12, 13. *Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no Resurrection of the Dead? But if there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then is not Christ risen.* " It cannot now any longer seem an impossible or incredible thing to you that God should raise the Dead, since you have so plain and undoubted an example of it in the Person of our blessed Lord, who having been truly dead and buried, is now alive, and hath appear'd unto many with the visible marks of his Crucifixion still remaining in his Body. And to shew
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of what general Concernment his Resurrection was, *the Graves were opened, as St. Matthew tells us, and many Bodies of Saints which slept, arose, and came out of the Graves after his Resurrection, and appeared unto many;* the same Power which raised Jesus from the Dead, is able also to quicken our mortal Bodies.

Now in my Text the Apostle brings in some sceptical Person objecting against this Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Dead, *But some Man will say, How are the Dead raised up? and with what Body do they come?* Two Questions that every one almost is ready to start, especially those who love to cavil at Religion: and it hath not a little puzzled such as have undertaken to give a rational Account of our Faith, to give a full and satisfactory answer to them. “ *How can these things be?*

“ How is it possible that those Bodies
 “ should be raised again, and joined to
 “ the Souls which formerly inhabited
 “ them, which many thousand Years ago
 “ were either buried in the Earth, or
 “ swallowed up in the Sea, or devoured
 “ by Fire; which have been dissolved in-
 “ to the smallest Atoms, and those scatter-
 “ ed over the face of the Earth, and dis-
 “ persed as far asunder as the Heaven is
 “ wide;

“ wide ; nay which have undergone ten
“ thousand several Changes and Transmu-
“ tations, have fructified the Earth, be-
“ come the nourishment of other Animals,
“ and those the Food again of other Men,
“ and so have been adopted into several
“ other Bodies ? How is it possible that
“ all those little Particles which made up,
“ suppose, the Body of *Abraham*, should
“ at the end of the World be again ranged
“ and marshalled together, and unmixt
“ from the Dust of other Bodies, be all dis-
“ posed into the same Order, Figure and
“ Posture they were before, so as to make
“ the very self-same Flesh and Blood which
“ his Soul at his dissolution forsook ? This
“ seems a *Camel* too big for any consider-
“ ing Person to swallow : he must be of
“ a very easie Faith who can digest such
“ Impossibilities. *Ezekiel* indeed, when
“ the hand of the Lord was upon him, and
“ he was carried out in the Spirit of the
“ Lord, thought he was set down in the
“ midst of a Valley full of dry Bones ; and
“ that afterwards he heard a Noise, and
“ beheld a shaking, and the Bones came to-
“ gether, Bone to his Bone, the Sinews and
“ the Flesh came up upon them, and the Skin
“ covered them above, and the Breath came
“ into them, and they lived and stood upon
“ their

“ *their Feet.* This may pass well enough
“ in a Prophetical Vision, and did hand-
“ somely represent the wonderful resto-
“ ration of the *Jewish People* : but that
“ all this and much more should in truth
“ come to pass, that our Bones after they
“ are resolved into Dust, should really be-
“ come living Men; that all the little
“ Atoms whereof our Bodies consisted,
“ howsoever scattered, or wheresoever
“ lodged, should immediatly at a gene-
“ ral Summons rally and meet again, and
“ every one challenge and possess its own
“ proper place, till at last the whole ru-
“ ined Fabrick be perfectly rebuilt, and
“ that of the very self-same Stuff and Ma-
“ terials whereof it consisted before its
“ Fall; that this, I say, should ever real-
“ ly be effected, is such an incredible
“ thing, that it seems to be above the
“ Power of Reason so much as to frame
“ a conception of it. And therefore we
may observe that the *Gentiles* did most
especially boggle at this Article of our
Christian Faith, as we read in the 17th
of the *Acts*: when St. *Paul* preached un-
to the *Athenians* concerning the Resurrec-
tion of the Dead, the Philosophers mock-
ed at him, and entertained his Doctrin
with nothing but Scoffs and Flouts; and
indeed

indeed it was one of the last things that the *Heathens* received into their belief; and it is to this day the chiefest Objection against *Christianity*. *How are the Dead raised up? and with what Body do they come?* In my discourse of these Words I shall do these three things.

- I. I shall shew that the Resurrection of the Dead, even in the strictest Sense, as it is commonly understood and explained of the very self-same Body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it impossible or incredible.
 - II. Since it is certain that the Body which we shall rise with, tho it may be as to Substance the same with our terrestrial Body, yet will be so much altered and changed in its Modes and Qualities, that it will be quite another kind of Body from what it was before; I shall give you a short Account of the difference the Scripture makes between a glorified Body and this mortal Flesh. And,
 - III. Lastly, I shall draw some practical Inferences from the whole.
- I. I shall shew that the Resurrection of
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the Dead, even in the strictest Sense, as it is commonly understood and explained of the very self-same Body that died and was buried, contains nothing in it impossible or incredible.

Whether this strict sense of the Article be true or not, I think I need not determine; it is sufficient for me to shew, that if this be the true Sense of it, yet the *Atheist* or *Sceptick* hath nothing considerable to object against it, but what is capable of a fair and easie Answer. However give me leave just to lay before you some of the principal Reasons and Scriptures upon which it is built and established. And

1. I think it must be acknowledged that this hath been all along the most common received Opinion among *Christians*, that at the last day we shall rise again with the very same Flesh with which we are clothed in this State, and which we put off at our Death; and that our heavenly Bodies will not only consist of the same Substance and Matter with our earthly, but will be of the same Consistence and Modification, perfect Flesh and Blood, tho' in some Properties altered and changed. Most of the antient Fathers of the Church (excepting some few that

that were of a more inquisitive Temper and Philosophical Genius than the rest, as *Origen* and some others) did believe and teach, that at the general Resurrection Men should be restored to the very same Bodies which they dwelt in here, and which at last were laid in the Grave: that their Bodies should be then as truly the same with those they died in, as the Bodies of those whom our Saviour raised when he was upon Earth were the same with those they had before; that no other Body should be raised but that which slept; and that as our Saviour *Christ* arose with his former Flesh and Bones and Members, so we also after the Resurrection should have the same Members we now use, the same Flesh and Blood and Bones.

And that this was the common Belief and expectation of all *Christians* in the primitive times, that they should appear again at the general Resurrection with the very same Bodies they lived in here on Earth, will appear from that Spite and Malice which the *Heathens* sometimes shewed to the dead Bodies of *Christians*, reducing them to Ashes, and then scattering them into the Air, or throwing them into Rivers, that thereby they might defeat and deprive them of all hopes of a Resurrection.

tion. Of this *Eusebius* gives us an eminent Instance out of the Epistle of the Churches of *Vienna*, and *Lyons* in *France*, to those in *Asia* and *Phrygia*, under the Persecution of *Antoninus Verus*; which gives an account, how that the *Heathens*, after many vain and fruitless Attempts to suppress the *Christian Religion*, by inflicting the cruellest Torments on the Professors of it, which they bravely endured, looking for a joyful Resurrection; at last thought of a way to deprive them, as they fondly imagined, of that great hope which ministred so much Joy and Courage to them under the severest Tryals; which was by reducing the wrackt and mangled Bodies of the several *Martyrs* into the minutest *Atoms*, and then scattering them in the great River *Rhodanus*. Let us now, say they, see whether they can rise again, and whether their God can help them, and deliver them out of our hands. Now this is a sufficient Intimation to us, that it was then the known common Opinion of *Christians*, that the very same Body and Flesh which suffered and was martyred here on Earth, should be raised again at the last Day. And indeed those amongst the *Antient Christians* who have undertaken to defend or explain this Article of the

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the Resurrection of the Dead, do it most-ly by such Principles, Arguments and Illustrations, as suppose the very same Body and Flesh and Members to be raised again, which the Soul animated here in this Life.

2. This hath not only been the common received Opinion of *Christians*, but also the most plain and easie Notion of a Resurrection seems to require it; namely, that the very same Body which died should be raised again. Nothing dies but the Body, nothing is corrupted but the Body; the Soul goeth upward, and returns to God; and therefore nothing else can be properly said to be raised again, but only that very Body which died and was corrupted. If God give to our Souls at the last day a new Body, this cannot literally be called the Resurrection of our Bodies, because here is no Reproduction of the same thing that was before, which seems to be plainly implied in the word *Resurrection*. Indeed the Word is sometimes used otherwise, as when a House or Temple that hath been consumed by Fire, is rebuilt on the same Ground where it formerly stood, this is often, tho improperly and figuratively, called the Resurrection of it: and after the same manner do the

Latins use the Word *Resurgere* : but yet the most proper and literal signification of the word *Resurrection*, is, that the same Flesh which was separated from the Soul at the day of Death, should be again vitally united to it.

3. There are many Places of Scripture which in their strict and literal meaning do seem plainly to favor this Sense of the Article, that the very same Flesh shall be raised again. What more plain and express, saith St. *Hierome*, than that of *Job*? *Job* 19. 26, 27. *Tho after my skin Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for my self, and my Eyes shall behold, and not another.* But however plain these Words may seem to be, yet I cannot think that the primary and original Meaning of them doth at all relate to the Resurrection, nor were they ever so understood and interpreted by the *Jews*, as *Grotius* tells us; not but that they might be propheticall of it, and so by way of accommodation may be fitly applied to it. But the first and most easie Sense of the Words seems to be this:
 “ After my Skin is consumed, let that
 “ which remains of me likewise by piece-
 “ meals be destroyed; yet I am confident
 “ that, before I die, with these very
 “ Eyes

“ Eyes I shall see my Redeemer, and be restored by him to my former happy State. So that the Words are a plain Prophecy of his own Deliverance, and a high Expression of his confident hope in God, that in time he would vindicate his Innocence, and bring him out of all his Troubles. But if this place will not hold, there are others in the *New Testament* of the same Importance.

St. Paul in the 53^d verse of this Chapter, speaking of our Body, and the glorious change it shall undergo at the Resurrection, tells us, that *this Corruptible shall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal shall put on Immortality*: now by this *Corruptible* and this *Mortal* can only be meant that Body which we now carry about with us, and shall one day lay down in the Dust. Thus also the same *Apostle* tells us, *Rom. 8. 11. He that raised up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken our mortal Bodies.* Now that which shall be quickned and raised to Life again, can be nothing else but that very Body of Flesh which is mortal, and died: tho there is some question to be made, whether the *quickenng our mortal Bodies by the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us*, should not rather be understood in a *metaphorical* or moral Sense, of the

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first Resurrection from the death of Sin to the life of Righteousness, than of the general Resurrection at the Consummation of all things.

But farther ; the mention and description on the Scripture makes of the Places from whence the Dead shall rise, doth seem plainly to intimate, that the same Bodies which were dead shall revive again. Thus we read in *Daniel*, Ch. 12. 2. *That those that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Death.* Where we may yet farther observe, that the Metaphor of *Sleeping* and *Awaking*, by which our Death and Resurrection is here expressed, doth seem to imply, that when we rise again, our Bodies will be as much the same with those we lived in, as they are when we awake, the same with those we had before we laid our selves down to sleep. Thus again it is said in St. *John's* Gospel, Chap. 5. ver. 28, 29. *The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth : they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life ; and they that have done evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.* And in the *Revelations*, Chap. 20. verse 13. *And the Sea gave up the Dead which were*
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in it; and Death and Hell, that is, the Grave, delivered up the Dead that were in them; and they were judged every Man according to their Works. Now if the same Flesh shall not be raised again, what need is there of ransacking the Graves at the end of the World? The Sea can give up no other Bodies but the same which it received in; nor can the Grave deliver up any, but only those that were laid therein: if it were not necessary that we should rise with the very same Bodies, the Graves need not be opened, but our Flesh might be permitted to rest there for ever. To this may be added, that St. Paul tells us in *Philip. 3.* ver. 21. that our Saviour shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious Body. Now this vile Body can be no other than this Flesh and Blood, which we are now clothed with, restored to Life again.

4. If we consider the several Instances and Examples either of those who did immediately ascend up into Heaven, or of those who after Death were restored to Life again, they all seem plainly to confirm this Opinion, that at the last Day we shall rise again with the very same Flesh and Blood which we had here. *Enoch* and *Elias* of old were translated into

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Heaven in their terrestrial Bodies; and therefore may be supposed now to live there with the same Flesh and Parts they had when they were here upon Earth. And those three that were raised from the Dead in the *Old Testament*, and those that were recalled to Life by our Saviour, or accompanied him at his Resurrection, all appeared again in the very same Bodies they had before their Dissolution: and these were Examples and Types of the general Resurrection, and therefore our Resurrection must resemble theirs, and we also must appear at the last day with the same Bodies we lived in here. Even our blessed Saviour himself, who was the *first Fruits of them that slept*, did raise his own Body, according to that Prediction of his, *Destroy this Temple, and in three Days I will build it up again*. Nay he appeared to his Disciples with the very Prints of the Nails in his Hands and Feet, and with all the other Marks of his Crucifixion: *Behold my Hands and my Feet*, says he, *that it is I my self; handle me, and see: for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have*. From whence it seems to follow, that we in our Resurrection shall be conformable to our Saviour, and resume the very same Bodies that were laid in the Sepulchre.

5. And

5. And lastly, It is farther urged by some of the *Antients*, for a Proof of the Resurrection of the same Body, that the exact Justice and Righteousness of God doth require it; that God's Justice, I mean that which consists in the equal Dispensation of Rewards and Punishments, will seem to be much obscured, at least will not be so illustriously manifested and displayed to the World, unless the same body of Flesh be raised again; that so that which was here the constant Partner with the Soul in all her Actions, whether good or evil, may also hereafter share with her in her Rewards or Punishments. It seems but equal that we should be punished in the same Body in which we sinned; and that that very Flesh in which we pleased God should be exalted and glorified at the last Day, and receive a just Recompence of Reward for all the trouble and hardship it underwent in this Life.

Thus I have given you a brief Account of this strictest Sense of the Article of the Resurrection, namely, that the very self-same Flesh and Blood which make up our Bodies here on Earth, shall be raised again at the last Day; and after it hath been changed and glorified by the Power of the Spirit of *Christ* (I speak only of the Bodies of

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good

good Men) shall ascend up into Heaven, and there live and dwell for ever in the presence of God. I come now to shew that there is nothing in all this impossible or incredible: which I shall do by proving these three things.

1. That it is possible for God to observe and distinguish, and preserve unmixt from all other Bodies, the particular Dust and *Atoms* into which the several Bodies of Men are dissolved, and to recollect and unite them together, how far soever dispersed asunder.

2. That God can form that Dust so recollected together, of which the Body did formerly consist, into the same Body it was before. And

3. That when he hath made this Body, he can enliven it, and make it the same living Man, by uniting it to the same Soul and Spirit that used formerly to inhabit there. It cannot be denied, but that these three things do express the whole of the Resurrection of our Flesh in the strictest Sense; and none of these are impossible.

1. God can observe and distinguish, and preserve unmixt from all other Bodies, the particular Dust and *Atoms* into which the several Bodies of Men are dissolved, and
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recollect and unite them together, how far soever dispersed asunder. God is Infinite in Wisdom, Power and Knowledg; He knoweth the number of the Stars, and calleth them all by their Names: He measures the Waters in the hollow of his Hand, and metes out the Heavens with a Span, and comprehends the Dust of the Earth in a Measure: He numbers the Hairs of our Head; and not so much as a Sparrow falls to the Ground without his knowledg. He can tell the number of the Sands of the Sea-shore, as the Heathens used to express the Immensity of his Knowledg: And is it at all incredible that such an infinite Understanding should distinctly know the several Particles of Dust into which the Bodies of Men are mouldred, and plainly discern to whom they belong, and observe the various Changes they undergo in their Passage thro several Bodies? Why should it be thought strange, that He who at first formed us; whose Eyes did see our Substance yet being imperfect, and in whose Book all our Members were written; from whom our Substance was not hid, when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the Earth, should know every Part of our Bodies, and every Atom whereof they are composed? The curious Artist knows

knows every Pin and part of the Watch or Machine which he frames ; and if the little Engine should fall in pieces, and all the parts of it lie in the greatest disorder and confusion, yet he can soon rally them together, and as easily distinguish one from another, as if every one had its particular mark : He knows the use of every part, can readily assign to each its proper place, and exactly dispose them into the same figure and order they were in before. And can we think that the *Almighty Architect* of the World, whose Workmanship we are, doth not know whereof we are made, or is not acquainted with the several Parts and Materials of which this earthly Tabernacle of ours is framed and composed ? The several corporeal Beings that now constitute this Universe, at the first Creation of the World lay all confused in a vast Heap of rude and indigested *Chaos*, till by the Voice of the Omnipotent they were separated one from the other, and framed into those distinct Bodies, whereof this beautiful and orderly World doth consist : And why may not the same Power at the Consummation of all things, out of the Ruins and Rubbish of the World, collect the several Reliques of our corrupted Bodies, reduce them each to their proper Places,

Places, and restore them to their primitive Shapes and Figures, and frame them into the same individual Bodies they were parts of before? All the Atoms and Particles into which Mens Bodies are at last dissolved, however they may seem to us to lie carelessly scattered over the face of the Earth, yet are safely lodged by God's wise disposal in several Receptacles and Repositories till the Day of restitution of all things: *in aquis, in ignibus, in alitibus, in bestiis*, saith *Tertullian*; they are preserved in the *Waters*, in *Birds*, and *Beasts*, till the sound of the last Trumpet shall summon them, and recal them all to all their former Habitations.

But the chiefest and most usual Objection against what I am now pleading for is this, That it may sometimes happen that several Mens Bodies may consist of the very self-same Matter: for the Bodies of Men are oftentimes devoured by Beasts and Fishes, and other Animals, and the Flesh of these is afterward eaten by other Men, and becomes part of their nourishment, till at last the same Particles of Matter come to belong to several Bodies; and it is impossible that at the Resurrection they should be united to them all. Or, to express it shorter, it is reported of some whole

whole Nations, that they devour the Bodies of other Men, and feed upon human Flesh; so that these must necessarily borrow great part of their Bodies of other Men: and if that which was part of one Man's Body, comes afterwards to be part of another Man's, how can both rise at the last Day with the very self-same Bodies they had here? But to this it may be easily replied, that but a very small and inconsiderable part of that which is eaten, and descends into the Stomach, turns into Nourishment; the far greater part goes away by Excretions and Perspirations. So that it is not at all impossible but that God Almighty, who watcheth over all things by his Providence, and governs them by his Power, may so order the matter, that what is really part of one Man's Body, tho eaten by another, yet shall never come to be part of his Nourishment; or else, if it doth nourish him, and consequently become part of his Body, that it shall wear off again, and sometime before his Death be divided and separated from it, that so it may remain in a condition to be restored to him who first laid it down in the Dust. And the like may be said of *Men-eaters*, if any such there be, that God by his wise Providence may take care, either

ther that they shall not be at all nourished by other Mens Flesh, which they so inhumanly devour ; or if they be nourished by it, and some Particles of Matter, which formerly belonged to other Men, be adopted into their Bodies, yet that they shall yield them up again before they die, that they may be in a capacity of being restored at the last Day to their right Owners.

But perhaps it may seem to some, unworthy of God, and beneath his Divine Majesty, to attend to such little things, and to concern himself about such mean and trivial Matters ; or inconsistent with his Ease and Happiness, to trouble himself with such a perplext and intricate Business, as curiously to mark and observe all the Particles of Dust into which the several Bodies of Men are dissolved, and exactly to distinguish one from another, and to preserve them entire and unmixed, and at last to restore them all to their old Bodies. But such persons should have a care, lest under pretence of pleading for God's Honour and Glory, they really lessen him, and derogate from all his other Perfections. It is the great Excellency and Perfection of the Divine Providence, that it extends itself to all, even to the least things, and that nothing is exempted from its Care and
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Influence: And to fancy that to govern the World is a burden to God, is surely to entertain mean and unworthy Conceptions of Him, and to judge of Him by the same rules and measures we do of our selves. It is very unreasonable, because we are of such weak and frail natures, as that a little Business and Imployment presently tires us, to think the same of God Almighty, as if it were any trouble to him, or at all interrupted his infinite Pleasure and Happiness, to take care of the World, and order and manage the several Affairs of it.

2. Of this Dust, thus preserved and collected together, God can easily remake and rebuild the very same Bodies which were dissolved. And that this is possible, must be acknowledged by all that believe the History of the Creation of the World, that God formed the first Man *Adam* of the Dust of the Ground. If the Body of Man be Dust after Death, it is no other than what it was originally; and the same Power that at first made it of Dust, may as easily remake it when it is reduced into the same Dust again.

Nay, this is no more wonderful than the formation of a human Body in the Womb, which is a thing we have daily experience

rience of, which without doubt is as great a Miracle, and as strange an instance of the Divine Power, as the Resurrection of it can possibly be : and were it not so common and usual a thing, we should as hardly be brought to believe it possible, that such a beautiful Fabrick as the Body of a Man is, with Nerves and Bones, and Flesh and Veins and Blood, and the several other parts whereof it consists, should be raised out of those Principles of which we see it is made, as now we are, that hereafter it should be rebuilt, when it is crumbled into Dust. Had we only heard or read of the wonderful Formation of the Body of Man, we should have been as ready to ask, *How are Men made, and with what Bodies are they born ?* as now we are, when we hear of the Resurrection, *How are the Dead raised up ? and with what Bodies do they come ?*

3. When God hath raised again the same Body out of the Dust into which it was dissolved, He can enliven it, and make it the same living Man, by uniting it to the same Soul and Spirit which used formerly to inhabit there. And this we cannot with the least shew of Reason pretend impossible to be done, because we must grant that it hath been already often done. We have several undoubted Exam-
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ples of it in those whom the Prophets of old, and our blessed Saviour and his Apostles raised from the Dead. Nay our Saviour himself, after he was dead and buried, rose again, and appeared alive unto his Disciples and others, and was sufficiently known and owned by those who had accompanied him, and conversed with him for many years together, and that not presently, but after long doubting and hesitation, upon undeniable conviction and proof, that he was the very same Person they had seen expiring upon the Cross.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew you that in the strictest notion of the Resurrection there is nothing that is absurd or impossible, or above the Power of such an infinite Being as God is. The only thing I know of that can with any pretence of reason be objected against what I have discours'd upon this Head, is this, That this way of arguing from God's Omnipotency is very fallacious, and hath been often much abused: for under this pretence that nothing is impossible to an Infinite Power, all the *Rabbinical* and *Mahometan* Fables, or, which are as incredible, all the *Popish Legends*, may be obtruded on us for *Authentick Histories*; since there is nothing contained in them
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that is absolutely above or beyond God's Power to effect, if he pleases to exert it. Whence some of the *Fathers* have observed, that the Omnipotency of God was the great Sanctuary of *Hereticks*, to which they always betook themselves when they were baffled by Reason. And indeed so much is certainly true, that God's Omnipotency alone is no good Argument to prove the truth of any thing, for without doubt there are an infinite number of things which are possible to be done or made, which yet God in his infinite Wisdom never thought fit to exercise his Power about, nor perhaps ever will : and therefore we ought not to conclude, because God can raise us again with the very same Bodies we have here, that therefore he will do so. But supposing that God hath expressly revealed and declared that he will do it, from the consideration of his infinite Power, we are bound (however impossible it may seem to us, so long as it doth not plainly imply a contradiction) not to doubt of the truth of it, but firmly to believe, that he that hath promised, can also perform. We must first therefore be assured that it is the Will of God to raise again the same Flesh which was laid in the Grave, and then we may safely have re-

course to the Omnipotency of God to confirm and establish our Faith of it.

I conclude this Head therefore with that Question of St. Paul's, *Acts* 26. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the Dead?* The Change from Death to Life is not so great as that from Nothing into Being; and if we believe that God Almighty by the Word of his Power at first made the Heavens and the Earth of no pre-existent Matter, what reason have we to doubt, but that the same God by that mighty Power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, can also raise to Life again those who were formerly alive, and have not yet wholly ceased to be. And though we cannot answer all the Difficulties and Objections which the Wit of Men (whose Interest it is that their Souls should die with their Bodies, and both perish together) hath found out to puzzle this Doctrine with: tho we cannot fully satisfy our Minds and Reasons about the manner how it will be done, or the nature of those Bodies we shall rise with, yet this ought not in the least to shake or weaken our Belief of this most important Article of our *Christian Faith*. Is it not sufficient that an Almighty Being, with whom nothing is

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impossible, hath solemnly promised and
and past his Word, that he will re-animate
and re-enliven our mortal Bodies, and after
Death raise us to Life again? Let those
who presume to mock at this glorious hope
and expectation of all good Men, and are
continually exposing this Doctrine, and
raising objections against it, first try their
skill upon the ordinary and daily appear-
ances of Nature, which they have every
day before their eyes; let them rationally
solve and explain every thing that happens
in this World, of which themselves are Wit-
nesses, before they think to move us from
the belief of the Resurrection, by raising
some dust and difficulties about it, when
Omnipotency it self stands engaged for
the performance of it. Can they tell me
how their own Bodies were framed and
fashioned, and curiously wrought? Can
they give me a plain and satisfactory Ac-
count by what orderly steps and degrees
this glorious and stately Structure, consist-
ing of so many several Parts and Mem-
bers, which discovers so much delicate
Workmanship and rare Contrivance, was
at first erected? How was the first Drop
of Blood made, and how came the Heart
and Veins and Arteries to receive and
contain it? Of what, and by what means

were the Nerves and Fibres made? what fixt those little Strings in their due places and situations, and fitted and adapted them for those several uses for which they serve? What distinguisht and separated the Brain from the other Parts of the Body, and placed it in the Head, and filled it with animal Spirits to move and animate the whole Body? How came the Body to be fenced with Bones and Sinews, to be clothed with Skin and Flesh, distinguisht into various Muscles? Let them but answer me these, and all the other Questions I could put to them about the Formation of their own Body, and then I will willingly undertake to solve all the Objections and Difficulties that they can raise concerning the Resurrection of it. But if they cannot give any account of the Formation of that Body they now live in, but are forced to have recourse to the infinite Power and Wisdom of the first Cause, the great and sovereign Orderer and Disposer of all things; let them know that the same Power is able also to quicken and enliven it again after it is rotted and returned unto Dust. We must believe very few things, if this be a sufficient reason for our doubting of any thing, that there are some things belonging to it which we cannot per-

perfectly comprehend, or give a rational account of. In this state our Conceptions and Reasonings about the things that belong to the future and invisible World are very childish and vain; and we do but guess and talk at random, whenever we venture beyond what God hath revealed to us. Let us not therefore perplex and puzzle our selves with those Difficulties which have been raised concerning this Doctrine of the Resurrection; for it is no absurdity to suppose that an infinite Power may effect such things as seem wholly impossible to such finite beings as we are: but rather let us hold fast to what is plainly revealed concerning it, namely, that all those who love and fear God shall be raised again after Death the same Men they were before, and live for ever with God in unspeakable Happiness both of Body and Soul.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew the possibility of a Resurrection in the strictest sense: I now proceed to the second thing I propounded, which was,

II. (Since it is certain that the Body we shall rise with, tho it may be as to Substance the same with our terrestrial Body, yet will be so altered and changed in its Modes and Qualities, that it will be

quite another kind of Body from what it was before.) To give you a short account of the difference the Scripture makes between a glorified Body and this mortal Flesh.

But before I do this, I shall premise this one thing; That all our Conceptions of the future State are yet very dark and imperfect. We are sufficiently assured that we shall all after Death be alive again, the very same Men and Persons we were here; and that those that have done good, shall receive Glory and Honour and eternal Life. But the nature of that Joy and Happiness which is provided for us in the other World is not so plainly revealed; this we know, that it vastly surpasses all our Imaginations, and that we are not able in this imperfect State to fancy or conceive the greatness of it; we have not Words big enough fully to express it; or if it were described to us, our Understandings are too short and narrow to comprehend it. And therefore the Scriptures, from which alone we have all we know of a future State, describe it either first negatively, by propounding to us the several Evils and Inconveniences we shall then be totally freed from; or else secondly by comparing the Glory that shall then be revealed with those

those things which men do most value and admire here : whence it is called an *Inheritance*, a *Kingdom*, a *Crown*, a *Scepter*, a *rich Treasure*, a *River of Pleasure*, a *splendid Robe*, and an *exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*. All which do not signify to us the strict nature of that Happiness which is promised us in another World, which doth not consist in any outward sensible Joys or Pleasures : But these being the best and greatest things which this World can bless us with, which men do ordinarily most admire and value, and covet the possession of, are made use of to set out to us the transcendent Blessedness of another Life, tho' indeed it is quite of another kind, and infinitely greater than the greatest worldly Happiness. These are only little Comparisons to help our weak Apprehensions and childish Fancies ; but we shall never truly and fully know the Glories of the other World till we come to enjoy them. *It doth not yet appear what we shall be.* From the Description which the Scripture gives of the other World, as from a Map of an unknown Country, we may frame in our minds a rude confused Idea and Conception of it, and from thence, as *Moses* from the top of Mount *Pisgah*, may take

some little imperfect Prospect of the Land of Promise; but we shall never have a complete Notion of it, till we our selves are entred into it. However, so much of our future Happiness is revealed to us, as may be sufficient to raise our Thoughts and Affections above the empty Shadows, and fading Beauties, and flattering Glories of this lower World: to make us sensible how mean and trifling our present joys and satisfactions are, and to excite and engage our best and most hearty Endeavors towards the attainment of it, whatever Difficulties and Discouragements we may meet with in this Life; tho all that can be said, or we can possibly know of it, comes infinitely short of what one day we shall feel and perceive, and be really possessed of.

Having premised this, I come to consider what change shall be wrought in our Bodies at the Resurrection, which is no small Part of our future Happiness: now this change, according to the Account the Scriptures give of it, will consist chiefly in these four things. 1. That our Bodies shall be raised *immortal* and *incorruptible*; 2. That they shall be raised in *Glory*; 3. That they shall be raised in *Power*; 4. That they shall be raised *spiritual*

tual Bodies. All which Properties of our glorified Bodies are mentioned by St. Paul in this Chapter, *verses 42, 43, 44.* So also is the Resurrection of the Dead. *It is sown in Corruption, it is raised in Incorruption; It is sown in Dishonour, it is raised in Glory; It is sown in Weakness, it is raised in Power. It is sown a natural Body, it is raised a spiritual Body.* And the Explication of these Words will give us the difference between the glorified Body which we shall have in Heaven, and that mortal Flesh and vile Earth which we are now burthened with.

I. The Bodies which we shall have at the Resurrection will be immortal and incorruptible; *verse 53. For this Corruptible must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal must put on Immortality.* Now these words *immortal* and *incorruptible*, do not only signifie that we shall die no more, for in that sense the Bodies of the Damned are also raised *immortal* and *incorruptible*, since they must live for ever, tho it be in intolerable Pain and Misery: but they denote farther a perfect Freedom from all those bodily Evils which Sin hath brought into the World, and from whatever is penal, afflictive, or uneasie to us; that our Bodies shall not be subject to
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Pain or Diseases, or those other Inconveniences to which they are now daily obnoxious. This is called in Scripture the *Redemption of our Bodies*, the freeing them from all those Evils and Maladies which they are here subject unto. Were we at the general Resurrection to receive the same Bodies again, subject to those Frailties and Miseries which in this State we are forced to wrestle with, I much doubt whether a wise considering Person, were it left to his choice, would willingly take it again; whether he would not chuse to let it lie still rotting in the Grave, rather than consent to be again fetter'd down and bound fast to all Eternity to such a cumberfom clod of Earth: such a Resurrection as this would indeed be what *Plotinus* calls it, ἀνάστασις εἰς ἄλλου ὕπνου, a *Resurrection to another Sleep*: it would look more like a Condemnation to Death again, than a Resurrection to Life.

The best thing that we can say of this earthly House and Tabernacle of Clay, the Tomb and Sepulchre of our Souls, is, that it is a ruinous Building, and it will not be long before it be dissolved and tumble into Dust: that it is not our Home, or resting-place, but that we look for another

ther House, *not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*; that we shall not always be confined to this doleful Prison, but that in a little time we shall be delivered from the Bondage of Corruption, and being disengaged and set free from this Burden of Flesh, shall be admitted *into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*. Alas! what frail and brittle things are these Bodies of ours? how soon are they disordered and discomposed? To what a Troop of Diseases, Pains, and other Infirmities are they continually liable? And how doth the least Distemper or Weakness disturb and annoy our Minds, interrupt our Ease and Rest, and make Life it self a Burthen to us? Of how many several Parts and Members do our Bodies consist? And if any one of these be disordered, the whole Man suffers with it: If but one of those slender Veins or tender Membranes, or little Nerves and Fibres, whereof our Flesh is made up, be either contracted or extended beyond its due Proportion, or obstructed, or corroded by any sharp Humour, or broken; what Torment and Anguish doth it create? How doth it pierce our Souls with Grief and Pain? Nay, when our Bodies are at their best, what Pains do we take, to what Drudgeries

ries are we forced to submit, to serve their Necessities, to provide for their Sustainance, and supply their Wants: to repair their Decays, to preserve them in Health, and to keep them tenantable, in some tolerable Plight and fitness for the Soul's use? We pass away our Days with Labour and Sorrow in mean and servile Employments, and are continually busying our selves about such trifling Matters, as are beneath a rational and immortal Spirit to stoop to, or be solicitous about; and all this only to supply our selves with Food and Raiment, and other conveniences for this mortal Life, and to make Provision for this vile contemptible Flesh, that it may want nothing that it craves or desires. And what time we can spare from our Labour, is taken up in resting and refreshing our tired and jaded Bodies, and giving them such Recruits as are necessary to fit them for Work again, and restore them to their former Strength and Vigour. How are we forced every night to enter into the Confines of Death, even to cease to be, at least to pass away so many Hours without any useful or rational Thoughts, only to keep these Carcasses in repair, and make them fit to undergo the Drudgeries of the ensuing Day?

Day? In a Word, so long as these frail, weak and dying Bodies, subject to so many evils and inconveniences both from within and without, are so closely linkt and united to our Souls, that not so much as any one Part of them can suffer, but our Souls must be affected with it; it is impossible that we should enjoy much Ease or Rest, or Happiness in this Life, when it is in the Power of so many thousand Contingencies to rob us of it. But our Hope and Comfort is, that the time will shortly come, when we shall be delivered from this Burden of Flesh: *When God shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying; neither shall there be any more Pain, for the former things are passed away: When we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the Sun light on us, nor any Heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed us, and shall lead us unto living Fountains of Waters.* Oh when shall we arrive to those happy Regions, where no Complaints were ever heard, where we shall all enjoy a constant and uninterrupted Health and Vigour both of Body and Mind, and never more be exposed to pinching Frosts or scorching Heats, or any
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of those Inconveniencies which incommode this present Pilgrimage? When we have once passed from Death to Life, we shall be perfectly eased of all that troublesome care of our Bodies, which now takes up so much of our Time and Thoughts: we shall be set free from all those tiresome Labours and servile Drudgeries, which here we are forced to undergo for the Maintenance and Support of our Lives; and shall enjoy a perfect Health, without being vexed with any nauseous Medicines, or tedious Courses of Physick for the Preservation of it. Those Robes of Light and Glory which we shall be cloathed with at the Resurrection of the Just, will not stand in need of those careful Provisions, or crave those Satisfactions which it is so grievous to us here either to procure or be without. *But they*, as our Saviour tells us, St. Luke 20. verse 35, 36. *which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection from the Dead, neither marry, nor are given in Marriage, neither can they die any more;* for they are ἰσχυροί, equal to Angels: they shall live such a life as holy Angels do. Whence Tertullian calls the Body we shall have at the Resurrection, *Carnem Angelificatam, Angelified Flesh*, which shall

shall neither be subject to those Weaknesses and Decays, nor want that daily Sustainance and continual Recruit which these mortal Bodies cannot subsist without. *Meats for the Belly, and the Belly for Meats, but God shall destroy both it and them.* This is that perfect and complete Happiness which all good Men shall enjoy in the other World, which, according to an Heathen Poet, may be thus briefly summon'd up. *Mens sana in Corpore sano, a Mind free from all Trouble and Guilt in a Body free from all Pains and Diseases.* Thus our mortal Bodies shall be raised *immortal*; they shall not only by the Power of God be always preserved from Death, for so the Bodies we have now, if God pleases, may become immortal; but the nature of them shall be so wholly changed and altered, that they shall not retain the same Seeds or Principles of Mortality and Corruption; so that they who are once cloathed with them, as our Saviour tells us, *cannot die any more.*

2. Our Bodies shall be raised in Glory. *Then shall the Righteous shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, Matt. 13.*
43. Our heavenly Bodies in Brightness and Glory shall contend with the Splendour

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dour of the Sun it self: A resemblance of this we have in the Lustre of *Moses's Face*, which, after he had conversed with God in the Mount, did shine so gloriously, that the Children of *Israel* were afraid to come near him, and therefore when he spake to them, he was forced to cast a Veil over his Face to cloud and eclipse the Glory of it: And that extraordinary and miraculous Majesty of *St. Stephen's* Countenance seems to be a Presage of that future Glory which our heavenly Bodies shall be cloathed with: *Acts 6. 15. And all that sate in the Council looking stedfastly on him, saw his Face as it had been the Face of an Angel.* That is, they saw a great Light and Splendour about him. And if the Bodies of Saints do sometimes appear so glorious here on Earth, how will they shine and glitter in the other World, when they shall be made like unto *Christ's* own glorious Body? For so *St. Paul* tells us, that *Christ will fashion our vile Bodies like unto his glorious Body.* Now how glorious and splendid the Body of *Christ* is, we may guess by the Visions of the two great Apostles, *St. Peter* and *St. Paul.*

The former of them, when he saw the Transfiguration of our Saviour when *his Face*

Face did shine as the Sun, and his Raiment became shining, and white as Snow, was at the Sight of it so transported and overcharged with Joy and admiration, that he was in a manner besides himself, for he knew not what he said. When our Saviour discovered but a little of that Glory which he now possesses, and will in due time communicate to his Followers, yet that little of it made the Place seem a Paradise: and the Disciples were so taken with the Sight of it, that they thought they could wish for nothing better than always to live in such pure Light, and enjoy so beautiful a Sight. *It is good for us to be here; let us make three Tabernacles:* here let us fix and abide for ever. And if they thought this so great a Happiness, only to be where such heavenly Bodies were present, and to behold them with their Eyes, how much greater Happiness must they enjoy, who are admitted to dwell in such glorious Mansions, and are themselves cloathed with so much Brightness and Splendor?

The other Appearance of our blessed Saviour after his Ascension into Heaven, to St. Paul as he was travelling to *Damascus*, was so glorious, that it put out his Eyes; his Senses were not able to bear a Light so

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refulgent: such glorious Creatures will our Lord make us all, if we continue his faithful Servants and Followers; and we shall be so wonderfully changed by the word of his Power, from what we are in this vile State, that the Bodies we now have will not be able so much as to bear the Sight and Presence of those Bodies which shall be given us at the Resurrection.

Now this Excellency of our heavenly Bodies the *Schoolmen* fanſie will ariſe in a great measure from the Happineſs of our Souls. The unſpeakable Joy and Happineſs which our Souls ſhall then enjoy, will break through our Bodies, and be conſpicuous, and ſhine forth in the brightneſs of our Countenances, and illuſtrate them with Beauty and Splendor; as the Joy of the Soul, even in this Life, hath ſome Influence upon the Body, and makes an imperfect Impreſſion upon the Countenance, by rendring it more ſerene and chearful than otherwiſe it would be: as *Solomon* tells us, *Eccleſ. 8. 1. That a Man's Wiſdom maketh his Face to ſhine.* Virtue and Goodneſs purifies and exalts a Man's natural Temper, and makes his very Looks more clear and briſk.

3. Our Bodies ſhall be *raiſed in Power.* This is that which the *Schools* call the Agi-
lity of our heavenly Bodies, the Nimble-
neſs

ness of their Motion, by which they shall be rendred most obedient and able Instruments of the Soul. In this State our Bodies are no better than Clogs and Fetters, which confine and restrain the Freedom of the Soul, and hinder it in all her Operations; *The corruptible Body, as it is in the Wisdom of Solomon, presseth down the Soul, and the earthly Tabernacle weigheth down the Mind that museth upon many things.* Our dull, sluggish and unactive Bodies are often unable, often are unready and backward to execute the Orders, and obey the Commands of our Souls, so that they are rather hindrances to the Soul, than any ways useful or serviceable to her. But in the other Life, as the Prophet *Isaiab* tells us, *Isaiab 40. 31. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their Strength, they shall mount up with Wings as Eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint: Or, as another expresses it; They shall shine, and run to and fro like Sparks among the Stubble; the Speed of their Motion shall be like that of devouring Fire in a heap of dry Stubble, and the height of it shall surpass the towring Flight of the Eagle: for they shall meet the Lord in the Air, when he comes to Judgment, and afterwards*

mount up with him into the third and highest Heavens. This earthly Body is continually groveling on the Ground, slow and heavy in all its Motions, listless, and soon tired with Action; and the Soul that dwells in it is forced, as it were, to drag and hale it along; but our heavenly Bodies shall be as free, as active and nimble as our very Thoughts are.

4. And Lastly; Our Bodies shall be *raised spiritual Bodies*; not of a spiritual Substance, for then the words would imply a Contradiction; it being impossible that the same thing should be both a spiritual and a bodily Substance. But spiritual here is opposed, not to corporeal, but to natural or animal; and by it is expressed, (as it is ordinarily interpreted) the Subtily and Tenuity and Purity of our heavenly Bodies. But I would rather explain it thus. In this State our Spirits are forced to serve our Bodies, and to attend their leisure, and do mightily depend upon them in most of their Operations; but on the contrary, in the other World our Bodies shall wholly serve our Spirits, and minister unto them, and depend upon them. So that by a natural Body, I understand a Body fitted for this lower and sensible World, for this earthly State, by

a Spiritual Body, such an one is suited and accommodated to a Spiritual State, to an invisible World, to such a Life as the Saints and Angels lead in Heaven. And indeed this is the principal difference between this mortal Body, and our glorified Body. This *Flesh*, which now we are so apt to dote upon, is one of the greatest and most dangerous Enemies we have, and therefore is defied and renounced by all *Christians* in their *Baptism*, as well as the *World* and the *Devil*. It continually tempts and solicits us to evil; every Sense is a Snare to us, and all its Lusts and Appetites are inordinate and insatiable; it is impatient of *Christ's* Yoke, and refuseth Discipline; it is ungovernable, and often rebelleth against Reason; and *the Law in our Members warreth against the Law of our Minds, and brings us into captivity to the Law of Sin which is in our Members*; and *when the Spirit is willing, the Flesh is weak*; so that the best Men are forced to keep it under, and use it hardly, lest it should betray them into Folly and Misery. We are now in a State of Warfare, and must always be upon our Guard and Watch, continually arming and defending our selves against the assaults of the *Flesh*, and all its violent and impetuous Motions. How

doth it hinder us in all our Religious Devotions? How soon doth it jade our Minds when employed in any divine or spiritual Meditations; or how easily by its bewitching and enchanting Pleasure doth it divert them from such noble Exercises? So that St. Paul breaks forth into this sad and mournful complaint, *Rom. 7. 24. O wretched Man that I am! who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death?* Who shall? Death shall. That shall give us a full and final Deliverance. When once we have obtained the Resurrection unto Life, we shall not any more feel those Lustings of the Flesh against the Spirit, which are here so troublesome and uneasie to us; our Flesh shall then cease to vex our Souls with its evil Inclinations, immoderate Desires, and unreasonable Passions; But being it self spiritualized, purified, exalted and freed from this Earthly Grossness, and all manner of Pollution, shall become a most fit and proper Instrument of the Soul in all her divine and heavenly Employments. It shall not be weary of singing Praises to God Almighty through infinite Ages: It shall want no respite or Refreshment, but its Meat and Drink shall be to do the Will of God.

In these things chiefly consists the difference between those Bodies which we shall have at the Resurrection, and this mortal Flesh; which we can but very imperfectly either conceive or express: but yet from what hath been discoursed on this Subject, it doth sufficiently appear that a glorified Body is infinitely more excellent and desirable than that vile and contemptible Flesh which we now carry about with us. The only thing remaining is,

III, and lastly; To draw some practical Inferences from all I have said on this Subject. I shall but just mention these five, and leave the improvement of them to your own private Meditations.

I. From what I have said, we may learn the best way of fitting and preparing our selves to live in those heavenly and spiritual Bodies which shall be bestowed upon us at the Resurrection; which is, by cleansing and purifying our Souls still more and more from all fleshly Filthiness, and weaning our selves by degrees from this earthly Body, and all sensual Pleasures and Delights. We should begin in this Life to loosen and untie the Knot between our Souls and this mortal Flesh; to refine our

Affections, and raise them from things below to things above; to take off our Hearts, and leisurely to disengage them from things present and sensible, and to use and accustom our selves to think of and converse with things spiritual and invisible; that so our Souls, when they are separated from this earthly Body, may be prepared and disposed to actuate and inform a pure and spiritual one, as having before-hand tasted and relished spiritual Delights and Pleasures, and been in some degree acquainted with those Objects which shall then be presented to us. A Soul wholly immersed and buried in this earthly Body is not at all fit and qualified for those celestial and glorious Mansions which God hath provided for us: An earthly sensual Mind is so much wedded to bodily Pleasures, as that it cannot enjoy it self without them, and is incapable of tasting or relishing any other, tho really greater, and infinitely to be preferred before them. Nay, such persons that mind only the Concerns of the Body, and are wholly led by its Motions and Inclinations; as do, *συνμαρτυροῦν τῷ ψυχῷ*, as it were *embody their Souls*, would esteem it a great Unhappiness to be clothed with a spiritual and heavenly Body: It would be like
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clothing a Beggar in princely Apparel. Such glorious Bodies would be uneasy to them; they would not know how to behave themselves in them; they would e'en be glad to retire, and put on their Rags again. But now, by denying the Solicitations of our Flesh, and contradicting its Lusts and Appetites, and weaning our selves from bodily Pleasures, and subduing and mortifying our carnal Lusts, we fit and dispose our selves for another State; and when our Souls are thus spiritualized, they will soon grow weary of this Flesh, and long for their Departure; they will be always ready to take wing, and fly away into the other World, where at last they will meet with a Body suited to their rational and spiritual Appetites.

2. From hence we may give some account of the different degrees of Glory in the other State. For tho all good Men shall have glorious Bodies, yet the Glory of them all shall not be equal: they shall all shine as Stars; and *yet one Star differeth from another Star in Glory: there is one Glory of the Sun, and another Glory of the Moon, and another Glory of the Stars. So also is the Resurrection of the Dead.* Some will have Bodies more bright and resplendent than others. Those who have done
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some extraordinary Service to their Lord, who have suffered bravely and courageously for his Name, or those who by the constant exercise of Severity and Mortification, have arrived to an higher pitch, and attained to a greater measure of Purity and Holiness than others, shall shine as Stars of the first Magnitude. *Dan. 12.3.* *And they that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament ; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* It is certain that the purest and most spiritual Bodies shall be given to those who are most fitted for them, to the most heavenly and spiritual Souls: So that this is no little encouragement to us to make the greatest proficiency we can possibly in the ways of Virtue and Piety, since the more we wean our selves from these present things and sensible Objects, the more glorious and heavenly will our Bodies be at the Resurrection.

3. Let this Consideration engage us patiently to bear those Afflictions, Sickneses, and bodily Pains which we are exercised with in this Life. *The time of our Redemption draws nigh :* Let us but hold out a while longer, and all Tears shall be wiped from our Eyes, and we shall never sigh nor sorrow any more. And how soon shall

shall we forget all the Misery and Uneasiness we endured in this earthly Tabernacle, when once we are clothed with that House which is from above? We are now but in our Journey towards the heavenly *Canaan*, are Pilgrims and Strangers here, and therefore must expect to struggle with many Straits and Difficulties; but it will not be long before we shall come to our Journys end, and that will make amends for all: We shall then be in a quiet and safe Harbour, out of the reach of those Storms and Dangers wherewith we are here encompassed: We shall then be at home, at our Father's House, no more exposed to those Inconveniences which, so long as we abide in this Tabernacle of Clay, we are subject unto. And let us not forfeit all this Happiness, only for want of a little more patience and constancy; but let us hold out to the end, and we shall at last receive abundant recompence for all the trouble and uneasiness of our Passage, and be enstated in perfect endless Rest and Peace.

4. Let this especially arm and fortify us against the fear of Death; for Death is now conquer'd and disarm'd, and can do us no hurt. It separates us indeed from this Body for a while, but it is only that
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we may receive it again far more pure and glorious. It takes away our old Rags, and bestows upon us Royal Robes : Either therefore let us lay aside the profession of this Hope of the Resurrection unto Life, or else let us with more courage expect our own Dissolution, and with greater patience bear that of our Friends and Relations. *Wo is us who are forced still to sojourn in Mesech, and to dwell in the Tents of Kedar :* for how can it be well with us so long as we are chained to these earthly Carcases? As God therefore said once to *Jacob, Fear not to go down into Egypt ; for I will go down with thee, and I will surely bring thee up again :* so may I say to you, Fear not to go down into the House of Rottenness, fear not to lay down your Heads in the Dust ; for God will certainly bring you out again, and that after a much more glorious manner. Let Death pull down this House of Clay, since God hath undertaken to rear it up again infinitely more splendid and useful.

5. And lastly ; Let us all take care to live so here, that we may be *accounted worthy to obtain the other World, and the Resurrection from the Dead.* Let us rise, in a moral sense, *from the Death of Sin to the Life of Righteousness ;* and then the
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second Death shall have no power over us. A renewed and purified Mind and Soul shall never fail of an heavenly and glorious Body in the other World; but a sensual and worldly Mind, as it hath no affection for, so can it find no place in those pure Regions of Light and Happiness. Since therefore we have this comfortable Hope of a glorious Resurrection unto Life Eternal, let us *purify our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*; let us hold fast our Profession, and stedfastly adhere to our Duty, whatever we may lose or suffer by it here, as knowing we shall reap, if we faint not. And this is St. Paul's Exhortation, with which he concludes his Discourse of the Resurrection: *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

A SERMON

Preached before the
House of COMMONS.

The Twelfth Sermon.

JOB XXVII. 5, 6.

*God forbid that I should justify you :
till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.*

*My righteousness I hold fast, and will not
let it go : my heart shall not reproach
me so long as I live.*

THESE Words may be considered
as the Resolution of a truly honest
Man, whose Virtue and Goodness
depends not upon any outward Accidents
or fortuitous Circumstances ; who in all
things

things keeps an exact Conscience, and in all Times, Places, and Conditions acts by the same unalterable Rule of Righteousness, and steadily pursues what is Good and Honest whatever he may lose or suffer by it. Would you know, saith *Seneca*, whom I call a good and perfect Man, I mean such a one, *quem malum facere nulla vis, nulla necessitas potest*. Whom no outward Force, no Exigence or turn of Affairs, neither prospect of Advantage, nor fear of Inconvenience can ever prevail with to do an evil or base Action; who can never be swayed by any particular sinister Interest, to do that which his own Mind inwardly disapproves and condemns.

A truly honest Man considers not what will take best, or please most, whether it will prove for his Credit or Profit, whether he shall gain or lose Friends by it, whether it will hinder or further his Advancement in the World; but in all cases inviolably keeps to what is fit, just and reasonable, and behaves himself as becomes a good honest Man, being wholly unconcerned for the success and event of what his Conscience tells him he ought to do: He is resolved to please God, and to do his Duty, and to maintain the Peace of his own Mind, let the World go as it will.

But

But on the other side, the crafty wise Politicians of this World live by no certain Law; profess, believe, practise this Religion, or that, or none at all, as may best sute with the present state of things and juncture of Affairs, or with those particular private Designs which they carry on in the World; and in all their Actions are governed by the giddy and uncertain measures of Interest and worldly Policy: and tho sometimes, if it happens to be for their interest so to do, they may seem to speak and act as fairly as any men whatever; yet to serve a turn, to promote their temporal Safety and Advantage, or some other by and selfish Design, they shall not refuse to commit the basest and foulest Crimes.

Now that which I would perswade you to from these words, is this, That in all your Actions you would govern your selves by the fixt and immutable Principles of Conscience and Honesty, and always stedfastly adhere to your plain Duty, tho never so highly tempted to swerve from it. — *Till I die I will not remove my Integrity from me. My Righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go, my Heart shall not reproach me as long as I live. I shall handle these Words,*

I. More

- I. More particularly, as they relate to *Job*, by whom they were spoken.
- II. More generally, as they may be applied to Men in all States and conditions.

I. As to the particular instance of *Job*, we all know he is propounded to us in holy Scripture as the most eminent Example of an invincible Resolution and unshaken Constancy in maintaining his Innocence and Integrity in two very different Fortunes, the one highly prosperous and flourishing, the other no less strangely adverse and calamitous; both which, one after another, by God's wise Providence did befall him, for the more illustrious trial and manifestation of his sincere and disinterested Loyalty to God and Religion; and it is no easy matter to determin in which of these two States he met with the greater Temptations; whether he found it the more difficult task to keep a good Conscience in that splendid and plentiful Condition he was once in, or to hold fast his Righteousness in that deplorable Poverty and want of all things, which he was at last reduced unto. For without doubt Riches and Honours and high Places, and

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an uninterrupted Prosperity, are as great Snares, and as dangerous Temptations, and often prove as fatal; nay, I may say, are generally more apt to draw men aside from the Love of Goodness and the care of their Souls, than the severest Afflictions, or the most surprizing Calamities and outward Crosses. So that *Job* perhaps was as much to be admired, and as hard to be imitated in his Virtue and Piety, when he was the greatest Man in the *East*, as in his Submission, Meekness, and Patience, when he became the miserablest Spectacle that Eyes ever beheld.

1. *Job* in his most prosperous State held fast his Righteousness, and would not let it go. Tho he enjoyed all the Pleasures, Riches, and worldly Satisfactions that the most ambitious or covetous Mind could crave, yet he was so strictly religious and temperate, that when he was deprived and stript of all, and left as bare and as naked as he was when he first came into the World, his Mind could not reproach nor condemn him for any unworthy or unhandson Carriage, for any one notorious failure in his Duty, that should provoke God to deal so harshly with him. His three Friends indeed unadvisedly fell into that Fault, which is so common amongst us even

even to this day, of judging and censuring men by their outward Conditions, and by what befalls them in this Life; they could not imagine that such unheard-of Calamities could betide an innocent Person: When therefore they saw so great a Lord and Prince in so forlorn a plight, him whom but a little before all men called Blessed, and accounted the Darling and Favourite of Heaven, sitting among the Athes, and scraping his painful Boils with a piece of a broken Pot, they presently began to suspect his Piety and Integrity, and to call upon him to confess those grievous Sins which had pluck'd down such terrible Vengeance upon his head, fondly presuming that he must needs be a greater Sinner than others, because he was more miserable and unfortunate. Which uncharitable Censure forced from this excellent Person those rhetorical and pathetic Vindications of himself and all his Actions in the days of his Prosperity, which you may find scattered up and down in this Book, especially in the 31st Chapter.

Tho his Friends were so unkind as to reproach and condemn him as guilty of some notorious Crimes, whereby he had justly deserved all those Evils which God had been pleased to lay upon him; yet his

own Conscience, a more impartial Judg, acquitted him, and spoke Peace to him. He was not afraid or ashamed to have all his Life past impartially and thoroughly examined, and whatever he had done exposed to publick view, and to the knowledge of all the World. Nay, he durst appeal to God himself, the Searcher of Hearts, and call the righteous and impartial Judg of the Earth to bear witness to his Uprightness and Sincerity. He challenged even his very Enemies, those who had the least kindness for him, to draw up a Bill against him, and to try if they could find any thing whereof to accuse him. He was so just, so humble, so moderate, so charitable, when he was in Power and Prosperity, that none either envied his Greatness, or rejoiced at his Fall. With such Prudence and Sobriety, with such Integrity and Temper did he manage a great and magnificent Fortune, that in the lowest ebb of it, when he was reduced to the meanest Condition a man can possibly sink into (and such a Change is most apt to open the mouths not only of our own Consciences, but of all that know us, against us) I say, in this his worst Estate, neither his own Mind, nor his Friends, nor his Enemies (if so good

a Man had any) could find matter of complaint or reproach against him. And this was such a remarkable Instance of pure and resolute Virtue, that God Almighty seemed to rejoice and triumph, that he had now found a Man, who could preserve himself innocent and upright, even amidst all the flattering Temptations that attend Riches and Power and worldly Greatness. *Hast thou considered* (said the Lord unto Satan, chap. i. ver. 8. as it were in a boasting manner) *my servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth Evil?* But,

2. Behold the Scene of a sudden quite changed, and extreme Poverty, Loss, and Pain dwelling there, where Plenty and Honor and Riches formerly made their abode. The great Enemy to Mankind was at length satisfied that this renowned Servant of God was not to be enticed by any of his Baits; that he had a Soul too great to fall in love with the fading Beauties and perishing Glories of this World; and therefore when he saw he would not be moved from his Duty by fair means, he uses Force and Violence, and sets him openly to assault that Virtue which would not be caught in any of his

own Conscience, a more impartial Judg, acquitted him, and spoke Peace to him. He was not afraid or ashamed to have all his Life past impartially and thoroughly examined, and whatever he had done exposed to publick view, and to the knowledge of all the World. Nay, he durst appeal to God himself, the Searcher of Hearts, and call the righteous and impartial Judg of the Earth to bear witness to his Uprightness and Sincerity. He challenged even his very Enemies, those who had the least kindness for him, to draw up a Bill against him, and to try if they could find any thing whereof to accuse him. He was so just, so humble, so moderate, so charitable, when he was in Power and Prosperity, that none either envied his Greatness, or rejoiced at his Fall. With such Prudence and Sobriety, with such Integrity and Temper did he manage a great and magnificent Fortune, that in the lowest ebb of it, when he was reduced to the meanest Condition a man can possibly sink into (and such a Change is most apt to open the mouths not only of our own Consciences, but of all that know us, against us) I say, in this his worst Estate, neither his own Mind, nor his Friends, nor his Enemies (if so good

a Man had any) could find matter of complaint or reproach against him. And this was such a remarkable Instance of pure and resolute Virtue, that God Almighty seemed to rejoice and triumph, that he had now found a Man, who could preserve himself innocent and upright, even amidst all the flattering Temptations that attend Riches and Power and worldly Greatness. *Hast thou considered (said the Lord unto Satan, chap. i. ver. 8. as it were in a boasting manner) my servant Job, that there is none like him in the Earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth Evil? But,*

2. Behold the Scene of a sudden quite changed, and extreme Poverty, Loss, and Pain dwelling there, where Plenty and Honor and Riches formerly made their abode. The great Enemy to Mankind was at length satisfied that this renowned Servant of God was not to be enticed by any of his Baits; that he had a Soul too great to fall in love with the fading Beauties and perishing Glories of this World; and therefore when he saw he would not be moved from his Duty by fair means, he uses Force and Violence, and sets him openly to assault that Virtue which would not be caught in any of his

Snares, nor yield to any of his gilded Temptations. And to this end, in one day he spirits away all his Wealth and Servants, slays all his Children by the fall of a House, and exercises such Cruelty upon his Body, that there was nothing about him whole and entire and free from Sores, but only *the skin of his Teeth*: he arms his own Wife and his best Friends against him: his *Brethren went far from him*: his *Acquaintance were estranged from him*: his *Kinsmen failed him*, and his *Familiars forgot him*: the young Children despised him; those that dwell in his House counted him for a Stranger; and those whom he loved most were turned against him. But when he was thus abandoned and forsaken of all, he yet held fast his Righteousness, and would not remove his Integrity from him; he still preserved a good Conscience, which neither the *Sabeans*, nor the *Chaldeans*, nor the Devil himself could rob him of. Notwithstanding all the violent Attaques of Satan, he bravely stood his Ground, and the greatness of his Sufferings served only to make his Courage and Constancy still more glorious and illustrious. Under all these Afflictions he entertained not an unworthy Thought; never uttered one hard word concerning God, but humbly
kissed

kissed the Hand that struck him, and received evil things from him with the same grateful Resentment he used to receive good things; and was as thankful for these sad Misfortunes and dire Calamities, as other Men are for the greatest Favours and Blessings. And whatever betided him in this World, yet he would never fall out with God, or do any thing that might displease him, or wound his own Mind and Conscience. Thus this Heavenly Champion came off with Success and Victory, and *the trial of his Faith and Patience was found unto Praise and Honour and Glory.*

Now the Words thus understood, relating in particular to *Job*, as exercised with these various Conflicts and Temptations, afford us these two plain, but useful, Rules.

1. That we should so manage our selves in times of prosperity, and so use and improve our worldly advantages of Health, Riches, Honour, Authority, and the like, that whenever we come to be deprived of them, our *Hearts* may have nothing to reproach us for.

2. That we should never, either to prevent, or to redeem our selves from any outward Evil and Calamity, do any thing which our own Minds and Con-

sciences do disapprove and condemn.

1. We should so manage our selves in times of Prosperity, and so use and improve all worldly Advantages of Health, Riches, Honour, Authority, and the like, that whenever we come to be deprived of them, our *Hearts* may have nothing to *reproach* us for.

It is certain, that so long as the World goes on our side, and we live in ease and plenty, and enjoy whatever our *Hearts* can wish for, we have not so quick and lively a sense of Good and Evil, nor do we ordinarily suffer our Consciences to speak so freely and plainly to us, as when we are under some Affliction or Distress. Whilst we enjoy an uninterrupted Prosperity, the Noise and Tumult of the World, the hurry and multiplicity of Business and secular Affairs, the variety of sensual Pleasures and Delights, the Mirth and Jollity of Company, and the several temporal Projects and Designs we have in hand, do generally so wholly engross and prepossess our Thoughts, as that they drown the softer whispers of our Minds and Reasons, and allow no time or opportunity to our Consciences to do their office. But when once we meet with a sudden check and stop, and are brought
into

into Straits and Difficulties ; when we are crossed and disappointed, and all our fine Hopes and Expectations are blasted and defeated, especially when Death and Judgment draws nigh ; then doth Conscience take the advantage against us, and fly in our Faces, and set our Sins in order before us, and fill our Minds with galling Regrets, and misgiving Fears, and disquieting and uncomfortable Reflections upon our past Follies ; and we soon begin to have quite other Notions and Apprehensions of things than we had formerly in the days of Sunshine and Security. Thus Joseph's Brethren, after they had sold him into Egypt, and thereby had afflicted their Father's Soul even unto Death, for a long time seemed pleased and satisfied with themselves that they had done no worse to their innocent Brother, that they had not slain him ; but afterwards, when they found themselves Captives in a strange Land, they laid their Hands upon their Breasts, and thought more impartially on what they had done, and said one to another, *We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear ; therefore is this Distress come upon*

us.

When

When we come to languish upon a Bed of Sickness, our Minds will then take the liberty to reproach us for those many Days of Health and Strength, which now without any sense or remorse we fondly trifle and squander away. Should our Riches take to themselves Wings, and fly away (and we all know how slippery and uncertain all these earthly Enjoyments are) it would then wound us sore to think how much we stretch'd our Consciences to get some part of them, and how prodigally we mis-spent other part of them; how much we loved them and trusted in them, and what an ill use we made of them. If ever we our selves should come to stand in need of the Help, Assistance, and Charity of others, how irksom and uneasy will it be to us to remember how little our Bowels were moved at the Misfortunes of our poor Neighbours, and what little compassion we shewed to the miserable and necessitous, and how loth we were in our flourishing condition to do any one a good turn, if it put us but to the least expence or trouble?

However great and prosperous your present condition may be, yet often consider, it may shortly be otherwise with you;
daily

daily interpose the thoughts of a Change: Should I lose this Honour, Esteem, Authority and Dignity I am now possessed of, how many untoward Scars and Blemishes will stick upon me? Should I be reduced to a mean low Estate, shall I not then blush to be put in mind of that Pride, Vain-glory, Haughtiness, Oppression and Domineering I was guilty of when I was in Place and Power? And will not the forced remembrance of such our base and unworthy Behaviour be more grievous and afflictive to us than any outward Loss or Pain? Our Consciences, which now we stifle and smother, will at such a time be even with us; *and our own Wickedness shall reprove us, and our Iniquity shall correct us*, as the Prophet expresseth it.

Learn therefore so to demean yourselves in Prosperity, as that your Hearts may acquit you, and have nothing to chide and rebuke you for when you come into Adversity; and so to husband and improve those present Advantages and Opportunities you have in your hands, that when they are withdrawn from you, you may be able with great comfort and satisfaction to reflect upon the good you have done with them; the sense of which will mightily blunt the edg, and mitigate

gate the Sharpness of those Evils that do at any time befall you: this was *Job's* great comfort and support under all his dismal Sufferings, when he was fallen from the highest Pinnacle of Wealth and Honour almost as low as Hell, that he had held fast his Integrity, and that his Mind could not reproach him.

2. We should never, either to prevent or to redeem our selves from any outward evil or calamity, do any thing which our Minds and Consciences do disapprove and condemn. Tho *Job* had lost all other things that Men usually call Good, yet *his Righteousness* he held fast, and would not let it go: and indeed the Peace of our own Minds is more to be valued than any temporal Blessing whatever; and there is no pain or loss so intolerable as that inward Fear, Regret and Shame which Sin and Guilt create: so that whatever external advantage we acquire in the World by wounding our Consciences, we are certainly great losers by it; no real good can ever be obtained by doing ill, a guilty Conscience being the worst evil that a Man can possibly be afflicted with.

Herein especially do inward Troubles exceed all outward Afflictions whatever that can happen to our Bodies or Estates; namely,

namely, that under all temporal Calamities, how desperate and remediless soever they be, yet we have something to buoy up and support our Spirits, to keep us in heart, and enable us to bear them, the Joys of a good Conscience, the sense or hopes of God's Love and Favour, the inward satisfaction of our own Minds and Thoughts: these things will wonderfully carry us through all those Difficulties and Adversities which we shall meet with in the World, and are able to uphold and cheer our Hearts under the greatest Pressures and Hardships; but when a Man's Mind it self is disturbed and disquieted, where shall he seek for, where can he find any ease or remedy?

This seems to be the meaning of the Wise-Man, in the 18th of the Proverbs, the 14th verse, *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmary, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* It is a saying much like that of our Saviour, *If the Salt hath lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?* If that by which we season all other things, it self want it, by what shall it be seasoned? So here, *the Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmary*, i. e. a Mind and Spirit that is at Peace within it self, that is conscious of its own Innocence and Integrity, will

will enable a Man to bear with great Patience and Contentment those Chastisements which God may see good to exercise him with in this Life; *but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* i. e. if that Spirit or Mind which should help us to bear all those Evils that betide us, be it self wounded and disquieted, what is there then left in a Man to sustain it? When our only Remedy is become our Disease, when that which alone can support us in all our troubles and distresses is become it self our greatest Torment, how shall we be able to bear it?

What dangers soever therefore we are exposed unto, let us be sure to preserve a good Conscience; nay, let us rather suffer the greatest evils, than do the least. If we always continue faithful and constant to the dictates of Reason and Religion, our Minds will be in Peace, and the Conscience of our having pleased God and done our Duty, and secured our greatest Interest, will hugely ease and alleviate our Afflictions, and sustain us under the most pressing evils we can suffer in this Life; whereas on the other side, the greatest Confluence of the good things of this World will not be able to free us from the disturbance and anxiety of an evil Conscience,

science, or to quiet and settle our Minds when harassed and tortured with the Sense of Guilt. And this shall lead me to the second thing I propounded, which was,

II. To consider these Words more generally, as they may be applied to Men in all States and Conditions: and then they propound to us this Rule, which we should always live by; namely, That we should upon no Consideration whatever do any thing that our Minds or Consciences reprove us for. And this is the just Character of an honest Man, and of one fit to be trusted, that he will never either out of Fear or Favor consent to do any thing that his Mind tells him is unfit, unworthy, or unbecoming, or that he cannot answer or justify to himself; but in all cases will do what is right and honest, however it may be thought of and relished by other Men; and resolutely adhere to his plain Duty, tho perhaps it may hinder his Preferment and Advancement, his Trade and Gain, and expose him to many Inconveniences in this World. I wish you would all with *Job* in my Text take up this brave Resolution, *My Righteousness I will hold fast, and will not let it go; my Heart shall not reproach me so long*

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as I live. For your Encouragement I shall only crave leave to represent unto you these two things.

1. That this is the plainest, easiest, and most certain Rule that we can propound to our selves.

2. That it is the wisest and safest Rule, the best Policy, all things considered.

1. That this is the plainest, easiest, and most certain Rule that we can propound to our selves. Let times be never so difficult or dangerous, and Affairs never so intricate and involved, yet an honest Man is hardly ever at a loss what to do; *The Integrity of the Upright shall guide him, and the Righteousness of the Perfect shall direct his Way.*

The Path of Justice and Honesty is streight, right on, neither to the right Hand nor to the left; there are no Labyrinths or winding Meanders in it, so that there is no great Wit or Cunning required to find it out. To any one whose Mind is free from Prejudice and evil Affections, who is not govern'd by blind Passion or Interest, or any by corrupt Designs, the Way he should walk in is plain and obvious, like the High-way. So it is called by the Prophet *Isaiab: A High-way shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness;*

*Holiness, and wayfaring Men, tho Fools,
shall not err therein.*

As for those indeed that will not keep the direct Road, but thinking to pass some nearer way, travel in untrodden Paths, thro desert Woods or solitary Fields, over Hedge and Ditch, as we say, it is no wonder if they are sometimes out of their Way, and go backward and forward, and are often at a stand, not knowing how to guide their Steps and what Path to chuse, till at last they are utterly lost and bewildred; and such are all the wise Men of this World, who make haste to be rich and are resolved by right or wrong to be great and powerful, and mind nothing but their own Interest and worldly Advantage; who forsake the plain and beaten Path of Virtue and Piety, and betake themselves to the crooked ways of unrighteousness; they are infinitely various and uncertain; sometimes they go straight forward, and then quite back again; sometimes they are of one Party, sometimes of another; to day of this Religion, to morrow of that, reeling to and fro like a drunken Man; so that whatever they profess themselves to be this Week, yet neither themselves, nor any one else can guess what Mind they will be

of the next, seeing their Opinions and Judgments and Practices depend upon such causes as are as variable as the Wind or Weather: they are always ready to turn as the Tide and Stream does, and are resolved to please those that are uppermost, like the *Roman* that told *Augustus Caesar*, in his Civil Wars, when asked by him what side he would take, that he would be *præda Victoris*, of that Party which prevailed.

But alas! what an absurd and unequal Life do such men lead? How do their Minds, their Words, their Actions clash and interfere one with the other? How often are they forced to contradict themselves, and to call themselves Fools or Knaves for doing those things, which afterwards, when another Interest is to be served, they are fain to disown, nay to do the quite contrary? Into what Mazes and Perplexities doth this wandering fickle and desultory Temper betray Men? What pitiful shifts are they put to to patch up such disagreeing Practices, and to reconcile such different Designs? since they are forced servilely to comply with so many several Humours, to act so many different Parts, and so often to follow other Counsels, and take new measures; with what great

great Artifice and Subtily must they continually manage themselves, with what wariness must they direct their Feet, lest by any Misadventure they should expose their own mean and sordid Designs?

Now such Persons as are thus fickle and inconstant to themselves, and are guided by no fixt and steady Principles, but only by their own present Interest, which depends upon the uncertain State of worldly Affairs, and a thousand other little Contingencies, must needs be often at a loss which way to steer themselves, and can never be certain they are in the right. They are always to seek, and are utterly unresolved what to say or do, till they can smell out how matters are likely to go, and see the final event and Issue of things: Such Men are like the *Samaritans*, who, as *Josephus* tells us, when the *Jews* were in any affliction or danger, disclaimed all Acquaintance with them, and Relation to them, and knew them not; but at another time, when the *Jews* prospered, and were great and potent, then they boasted of their Alliance, and would needs be near akin to them, of the Race of *Ephraim* and *Manasses* the Sons of *Joseph*.

But on the other side, he that aims at nothing more than to please God and his own Conscience, and to do the Duty of the Place he is in fairly and justly, in all times knows what to do, and is still the same Man, *and meddles not with those that are given to change*; his own Honesty is his Tutor and Director, his Counsellor and Guide. He knows that the nature of Goodness and Virtue is always the same, and cannot be altered by any change of the times or state of Affairs; and therefore under all external changes and occurrences whatever, he keeps the same smooth and even course of Righteousness, Peaceableness, Sobriety, Loyalty and Charity; whether the World smiles or frowns upon him, he still holds to his Principles, does the same things, and goes on in the same Road; and nothing, neither *Honour* nor *Disbonour*, neither *good Report* nor *evil Report* can divert him from it.

2. This is not only the plainest, but the wisest and safest Rule, the best Policy, all things considered. For if we resolutely maintain our Innocence and Integrity,

1. We shall ordinarily escape best in this Life; but however,

2. We

2. We shall be sure to come off well at last, and to be plentifully rewarded for our Faithfulness and Uprightness in the other World.

1. We shall ordinarily escape best in this Life. There is nothing that doth more contribute to our safety and security even in the worst and most dangerous times, than a firm and constant Adherence to our Duty. For.

(1.) By this we engage God Almighty to be our Friend, and do most effectually recommend our selves to his Care and good Providence : so long as we commit our Ways unto God in well-doing, and no hazards or dangers on the one side, nor any worldly advantages or conveniences on the other, can prevail with us in any one Instance to disobey him, we may be assured that he will never forsake us, but that he will either deliver us from those evils we fear, or else support us under them, and by the assistances of his blessed Spirit enable us to bear them with Patience and chearfulness. A good Man in all his dangers and distresses hath a sure Friend, who will always stand by him; an almighty Saviour and Deliverer, on whom he may securely rely for Salvation and Protection; he is not afraid of evil
D d 3 Tidings,

*Tidings, his Heart is fixed, trusting in th
 Lord: He hath nothing to agast him, or
 fill him with pale Fears, and dreadful
 Terrors and Jealousies; he hath no secret
 guilt that haunts him and stares him in
 the Face, and severely threatens him;
 and therefore amidst all worldly distrac-
 tions and confusions, he is not dismayed;
 his Innocence doth inspirit him with Bold-
 ness and Courage, he is not afraid to trust
 God with his Life and Honour, and Estate,
 or any thing else that is dear to him; and
 can with a humble Confidence and Assu-
 rance, as it were, challenge the Favour
 of Heaven, saying with good Hezekiah,
 Remember now O Lord I beseech thee, how
 I have walked before thee in Truth and with
 a perfect Heart, and have done that which
 is good in thy sight: tho the Earth should be
 removed, and the Mountains carried into the
 midst of the Sea; tho the Waters thereof
 should roar and be troubled, and the Moun-
 tains shake and tremble with the swelling
 thereof; nay, tho the World should
 crack and break in pieces about his Ears,
 yet intrepidum ferient ruinae, he would
 still be unmoved and unshaken. Knowing
 that his Father, his Friend, his Patron and
 Benefactor, whom he hath always served
 in the Honesty and Simplicity of his
 Heart,*

Heart, is Pilot of the Ship, in all the Storms and Tempests of this lower World; he can put his Trust in God, and with an unshaken confidence commit himself, and all he hath, to him, who is engaged to protect and defend the Innocent, who encourage and support themselves in him alone. The Lord is his *Strength*, his *Fortress*, his *Refuge in the Day of Affliction*; and under the *Shadow of his Wings*, as in an impregnable Castle, he can securely hide and shelter himself, *till these Calamities be overpast*.

But now on the other side, the worldly Projector, who will not trust himself or his concerns with Almighty Wisdom and Power, but endeavors to secure himself, and to raise his Fortunes, and make himself great and considerable in the World by Ways of his own devising, such as God doth not allow, nay doth strictly forbid; who, as it were, renounces God Almighty's care and protection, and places all his hope and confidence in his own Craft and Sagacity, hath nothing to support and bear up his Spirit under any misfortunes. In a time of publick danger and calamity he is the most disconsolate forsaken Wretch in the World: his Guilt arms every thing against him, and

makes him afraid even of his own Shadow, (like that wicked Emperour *Caligula*, who every time it thundred ran under his Bed, as if he had been aimed at in every crack;) at such a time he is at his wits end, and knows not where to turn himself, and his *Hope is as a Spider's Web*, nay *as the giving up of the Ghost*.

(2.) An honest and upright Man is most likely to find the best Treatment from other Men, even from the most wicked and ungodly. *Who is he that will harm you, saith St. Peter, if ye be Followers of that which is good?* 1 Pet. 3. 13. A good Man is armed with Innocence and Harmlessness, which will guard and defend him from the Injuries of wicked and lawless Men: his unaffected Piety, and unbiassed Honesty, and undissembled Charity, the excellency of his Temper and Disposition, and the unblameableness of his Life and Conversation will speak in his behalf, and plead his cause, and procure him so much Love and Esteem in the World, that there will be but few that can find the Heart to do him any mischief; as the harmless Innocence and Simplicity of little Children do secure and protect them from all harm and violence, and engage every one almost in their defence.

fence. Whence this Observation hath been made, and is justified by experience, that one who is unstable and wavering is loved by no Man, because he is not fit to be trusted ; but a Man who is constant to worthy and generous Principles, commands the like Constancy of esteem and veneration from all Men, and is commonly safe and secure in all times, his very Enemies reverencing such invincible Virtue and Honesty. He that desires and designs nothing but what is fair and reasonable, may promise himself the goodwill of all round about him : whereas he that is deeply engaged in worldly Intrigues, and is resolved, *per fas & nefas*, to enrich himself, and is always climbing higher, trampling upon all that stand in his Way, must necessarily be engaged in many Quarrels, and make many Enemies, and draw on himself the Envy and Ill-will of the proud and ambitious, and live in perpetual emulation and contention ; for as he striveth to exceed and overtop others, so others endeavour as much to get before him ; and tho for a while he getteth the better, yet his Enemies are at work to undermine him, and blow him up, and he must expect that in a little time some sudden change of Affairs,

fairs, some unlucky hit or other will tumble him down, and put an end to all his fine Designs and Projects.

(3.) Whatever misfortunes and disappointments an honest upright Man may meet with in the World, yet he incurs no real disgrace, *he shall not be ashamed in an evil Day*: no Man can reproach him, or justly insult over his Fall. Whereas when the designs of ambitious and covetous Oppressors are frustrated and defeated, when the crafty Politicians of this World are ensnared in their own devices, *the City rejoiceth*, it is matter of Sport and Triumph to their Neighbours, and every one acknowledges the justice of it. But I hasten:

(4.) An upright Man, how miserable and forlorn soever his outward condition be, yet is pleased and satisfied with himself: his mind is at quiet; and tho the Weather abroad be never so blustering and tempestuous, yet there is a calm within; and he is then most sensible of the Joy and Contentment which flows from Innocence and a rightly ordered Conversation, when there is the most trouble and confusion without him. When all the Plagues of God are poured upon *Egypt*, a good Man is a *Goshen* to himself, hath Light in Darkness, and under the most cloudy Appearance

pearance of the Heavens, finds nothing but clearness and serenity in his own Breast; and a good Conscience can make a Man rich and great and happy even in the midst of the greatest worldly Miseries and Distractions.

Whereas when wicked Men are in any danger or distress, they have a secret Enemy in their own Bosoms, and their guilty Consciences will fly in their Faces, and fill them with amazing Fears and Terrors, and wrack and torture their Souls with unexpressible grief and anguish. And O! how sad and disconsolate must their condition needs be, when the Arrows of the Almighty stick fast in them, and the Poison thereof drinks up their Spirits, and the Terrors of God set themselves in array against them; when there is nothing but dismaying dangers and distractions abroad, and all outward hopes fail them, and at the same time their own Minds write bitter things against them? This will double every evil that befalls them, the sense of Guilt being the very Sting and Venom of all outward troubles and distresses. But,

2. He that exactly observes the Rules and Dictates of his own Conscience, will be sure to come off well at last, in the final

final Account and Judgment; then God will confirm and ratify the Sentence of his Conscience, and publicly own and approve of what he hath done, and clear and vindicate his Innocence, and reward his Fidelity and Constancy before all the World.

At that day, when all our great Undertakers and Contrivers of mischief, all the cunning Practisers of Guile and Hypocrisie shall lie down in Shame; when their secret Arts and base Tricks, whereby they imposed on the World, shall be detected and *proclaimed*, as it were, *upon the House top*, and all their unworthy Projects and Designs shall be laid open and naked, being stript of those specious Pretences they here disguised them with; when the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to Light, and the counsels of all Mens Hearts shall be made manifest as the noon-day: at that day, I say, the upright and righteous Man shall stand in great Boldness, and shall lift up his Head with Joy and Confidence; and then it will appear that he was the best Politician, and the only Person that either understood or regarded his true Interest.

To conclude all. Our Consciences are either our best Friends, or our greatest Enemies;

Enemies ; they are either a continual Feast, or a very Hell to us. A Conscience well resolved and settled, is the greatest comfort of our Lives, the best Antidote against all kind of Temptations, the most precious Treasure that we can lay up against an evil Day, and our surest and strongest hold to secure us from all dangers, which can never be taken unless through our own Folly and Negligence.

But an evil clamorous Conscience that is continually twitting and reproaching us, is a perpetual Wrack and Torment ; it wastes our Spirits, and preys upon our Hearts, and eats out the sweetness of all our worldly enjoyments, and fills us with horrid Fears and ghastly Apprehensions ; this is that *gnawing Worm that never dieth*, the necessary fruit of Sin and Guilt, and the necessary cause of everlasting Anguish and Vexation.

I have some apprehensions of a future state yet their Reasonings about it, when left

A SERMON

Preached at

WHITE-HALL.

The Thirteenth Sermon.

2 TIM. I. 10.

—*And hath brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.*

LIFE and Immortality, by a figure often used in the holy Scriptures, is the same with Immortal Life, which our Saviour *hath brought to Light*, that is, hath given us undoubted assurance of, by the Revelation of the Gospel.

For tho all men by the Light of Nature have some apprehensions of a future State, yet their Reasonings about it, when left

to themselves, are miserably vain and uncertain, and often very wild and extravagant. The best Discoveries of the *Gentiles* about the other Life were weak and obscure, and the wisest *Philosophers* spake but doubtfully and conjecturally about it; nor even in the Books of *Moses*, or Writings of the *Prophets*, are there contained any plain express Promises of eternal Life: All the knowledg men had of it before, was but like the faint glimmerings of Twilight, till the Sun of Righteousness appeared; till God was pleased to send One from that invisible World, even his own most dear Son, to dwell here and converse amongst Men, to make a full Discovery to us of this unknown Country, and to conduct us in the only true way of this everlasting Happiness; a Happiness so great, that we have not Words big enough to express it, nor Faculties large enough to comprehend it: but yet so much of it is clearly revealed to us in the Gospel, as is most abundantly sufficient to raise our Thoughts, and incite our sincerest Endeavours for the obtaining of it.

By which plain Revelation of this State of Immortality,

First,

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First, is most illustriously manifested to us the transcendent Goodness and Indulgence of our most merciful Creator; in that he will be pleased to reward such imperfect Services, such mean Performances as the best of ours are, with Glory so immense, *as that Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor can it enter into the Heart of Man to conceive* the greatness of it. There is nothing in us, nor any thing done by us, that bears the least proportion to such an ample Recompence. Our best Actions stand in need of a Pardon, so far are they from deserving to be crowned. All possible Duty and Obedience we certainly owe to him, to whom we owe our Beings; and should God Almighty have exacted it from us only on the account of his sovereign Authority over us as we are his Creatures, we had been indispensibly obliged to all Subjection to him; but that he should over and above promise to reward our Faithfulness to him with eternal Life, this is a most wonderful instance of his infinite Grace and Goodness.

Secondly, By this Revelation of immortal Life, is farther demonstrated the exceeding great Love of our blessed Saviour, who by his Death and perfect Obedience not only purchased Pardon for all our past
Rebel-

Rebellions and Transgressions, not only redeemed us from Hell and Destruction, to which we had all rendred our selves most justly liable (which alone had been an unspeakable Favour) but also merited an everlasting Kingdom of Glory for us, if with true Repentance we return to our Duty. And this, if any thing, shews the infinite value and efficacy of our Saviour's appearing on our behalf, that by his most powerful Mediation he obtained not only Freedom from Punishment, but also unexpressibly glorious Rewards for us vile and wretched Sinners on easy and most reasonable Conditions.

Thirdly, This especially recommends our Christianity to us, which contains such glad Tidings, which propounds such mighty Arguments to engage us to our Duty, such as no other Religion ever did or could. For since Hope and Fear are the great Hinges of all Government, and the most prevailing Passions of human Nature, what better thing can be propounded to our Hope than to be as happy both in Body and Soul as we can be, and that for ever? What more dreadful thing to our Fear than everlasting Misery? And this indeed is the utmost that can be said or offered to men in order to the reclaim-

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ing them from their Sins, and recovering them to a conscientious observance of God's Laws, That God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will call all Men to an account for the Deeds they have done in this Body, and reward the sincere, faithful Christian with immortal Glory, and punish the Disobedient and Impenitent with everlasting Vengeance: and if men can harden themselves against these most powerful considerations, if they are not at all concerned or solicitous about their eternal Happiness or Misery, what other Motives are likely to prevail with them, or able to make any impression upon them? For is there any thing of greater weight and moment, that can be propounded to the Reasons and Understandings of Men, than what shall become of them in a state which they are very shortly to enter upon, and which shall never have an end?

I humbly therefore beg your patience whilst, with all the plainness and seriousness I can, I apply my self to these three sorts of Persons.

I. To those who would seem to doubt of this fundamental Doctrine of a future Life.

II. To those who profess to believe it, but not fully and heartily.

III. To

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III. To those who do really and constantly believe it.

I. I begin with those who would seem to doubt of this fundamental Doctrine of a future Life. And tho' far better things are to be hoped concerning all here present, who shew so much respect to Religion, as to bear a part in God's solemn Worship; yet since nothing is more complained of than the prevailing Atheism of this Age; and since, if we judg of mens Faith by their Lives, we cannot but suspect many of those who pass among us for orthodox Believers, to be really no other than mere Infidels in these matters; I shall not wholly pass these sort of Persons by: not that I design at large to shew you the unreasonableness of Atheism, or to set before you the undeniable Evidences we have in another World; but I shall put the whole Cause upon this short Issue.

Let us for once be so kind to the *sceptical* Disputers against Religion, as to suppose what they are never able to prove, that it is a very doubtful thing whether there will be another Life after this; that it is possible that all these Stories of a Judgment to come, Heaven and Hell, are mere Fables, the Inventions of crafty *Politicians* and

designing *Priests*; and that all good and vertuous men have been miserably deceived and fed with fond Hopes and Fancies, and have unnecessarily troubled themselves about the matters of Religion: (and surely you will all acknowledg this to be a very large concession) yet granting all this, nothing is more plain than that if we would act prudently, and consult our own Safety, we ought to believe and live as if all these Doctrines of Religion were most certainly true; for every wise man will run as little hazard as he can, especially in such things as are of the highest concernment to him, and wherein a Mistake would be fatal and undoing. Here therefore be pleased to consider,

1. What little hazard he runs, or what little loss he ordinarily undergoes, who believes and acts according to these Principles, should they all at last prove false.

2. What extreme and desperate hazard he runs, who doth not believe, nor live according to them, should they all at last prove true.

(1.) What little hazard he runs, or what little loss he ordinarily undergoes, who believes and acts according to these Principles, should they all at last prove false. All that this man loses or ventures

is only some present Gratifications, and Enjoyments which he denies himself; he crosses indeed the irregular Inclinations of his Nature, and forbears those Excesses that are truly hurtful to him, and lives according to the Dignity of his Species, and is possessed with Cares and Fears about another World (and these even the Atheist himself cannot wholly free his Mind from) and ties up himself to several Rules and strict Duties, which contribute not a little to his convenient living here; and perhaps is exposed to some Hardships, Reproaches, and Sufferings for Righteousness sake; and this is the worst of his Case: But on the other side, he is blessed at present with a contented Life, with Peace of Conscience, and the joyful expectation of an eternal Reward hereafter; so that if he be in the right, he is then made for ever; if not, if he be mistaken, his Condition however will be no worse than other Mortals: he will have lost indeed all the Pains and Trouble he was at about Religion; but if his Soul survive not his Body, he will never be sensible of it: this Disappointment will never vex nor grieve him in that Land where all things are forgotten. So that a virtuous and righteous man may ordinarily

pass his days here more easily and comfortably than any wicked person, and please himself all his Life long with the Hopes or Dreams of future Glories; which Fancy alone (were it no other) will make him abundant recompence for all the Self-denial it puts him upon. But if these things at last prove true, he is then blessed above all expression: if they prove false and vain hopes, and there be no other Life after this, yet will it be as well with *him* as with the *Atheist* in the supposed State of eternal Silence and Insensibility. He runs no hazard, he loses nothing, except some forbidden Pleasures, which in most cases it is best for him, even as to this Life, to be without. He is safe if these Doctrines be not true, and unspeakably happy for ever, if they be true.

(2.) Consider the extreme and desperate hazard that man runs who doth not believe nor act according to these Principles, should they at last prove true: for he stakes and pawns all that can be called good and desirable; he ventures being for ever undone and miserable, if he should chance to be mistaken in his Opinion, and it should at last prove that there is another Life after this. And therefore nothing would sooner convince such men of their dead-

deadly Folly, than if they would but sometimes ask themselves, when they are calm and sober, a few such Questions as these: What tho I have almost persuaded my self that Religion is nothing but a melancholy Dream, or a politick Cheat, or a common Error; yet what if at last it should be true? How dismal, and of what a-frighting consequence is a mistake in such a matter as this? What amazing, surprising Thoughts, Fears, and Despairs will it fill me with, if after all I should find my self to be alive when my Friends had closed my Eyes, and should presently be hurried away into the company of those Spirits, which I had before derided and drol'd upon, and into the presence of that God, whose Existence I had boldly denied? What Horror and Confusion must it create, when my Infidelity shall be confuted by such a woful Experiment, and I shall find my self suddenly entred into that endless State which I would not here believe any thing of?

Were the Arguments on both sides equal, yet the Hazards are infinitely unequal, since the one runs the chance of being for ever happy, the other runs the chance of being eternally miserable. Which one consideration justifies the Dis-

cretion of a religious Man in renouncing and despising the Glories and Pleasures of this World, tho it were very uncertain whether there were another Life after this. How much greater Madness then must they needs be guilty of, who reject this Doctrine of another Life, against all the Probabilities, Reasons, nay, Demonstrations of the truth of it? when they have as great evidence of the truth of it as its Nature will admit; when God from Heaven hath most plainly revealed it to them; when this Revelation is confirmed by all the Signs and Testimonies they can reasonably expect and demand; nay, when he hath implanted in their Souls such a lively apprehension of it, that they must offer the greatest force and violence to their Minds before they can bring themselves to disbelieve it? Nay, I believe, let the most resolved Sinner labour and struggle never so hard with himself to subdue and extirpate this natural Persuasion of another Life, yet after all his Pains he will not be able wholly to root out all Thoughts and Fears of it. This shall suffice for the first sort of Persons, those who doubt of, or deny this great Fundamental of Religion. I proceed now,

II. To those who profess to believe this immortal Life, but yet do it not really and heartily. And this I fear is the case of the generality of Christians amongst us. For it may well be enquired, what is the reason that this Promise of eternal Life (than which there cannot be a greater) hath yet so little power upon mens Minds, doth so little move their Affections? What makes their Endeavours after it so faint and languid? Are any of those good things which men here court and seek after, so desirable and considerable as the Glories and Joys of Heaven? Or are there any Evils in this World that can vie Terrors with Hell? This cannot be pretended, since all the good or evil things of this World can only make us happy or miserable for a short time, for this Life at most, which is not to be named with living for ever either in unspeakable Happiness or Misery. Whence is it then that Christians are so strangely cold and indifferent about these most weighty things of another Life, as if they were of no concernment to them? After all our search we must resolve it into one of these two Causes:

Either that men, whatever they profess, do not heartily believe this Doctrine,
or

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or else that they do not duly consider it.

(1.) Most men, whatever they profess or pretend, tho they dare not renounce or deny it, yet are not heartily and thoroughly persuaded of the certainty of this future State. Their Understandings were never rationally convinced of the truth of it, and so the belief of it is not firmly rooted and settled in their Minds.

Would but God Almighty be graciously pleased to indulge to us a sight of those future Glories and Miseries which he hath revealed in the Gospel, this we imagine would certainly prevail for the Conviction and Reformation of all men. Would he give us, tho but a short and transient view of that blessed Place where himself dwells, that we might but for a few Moments behold the Joys and Triumphs of those happy Souls that are admitted into his beatifick Presence; or would he but open the Gates of Hell, and once suffer us to look into those dismal Receptacles of impure Spirits, that so we might be eye and ear-witnesses of their grievous Torments and horrid Despair; such a Sight as this we doubt not would presently change us all, and make us whatever God requires us to be.

But

But God's Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts as our Thoughts. He governs Men in a method suited to their reasonable Natures, and hath given us such Assurances of another Life, as are abundantly sufficient to satisfy and convince the Understandings of Men, but yet may be resisted by those who have no mind, or are resolved not to believe it: For there could have been no trial of Men, no Discrimination made between the wise and considering, and the foolish and wicked, if the Rewards of Religion had been present, or exposed to our Senses. God will not force a Faith upon us, as the sight of these things would do, but will have it to be a matter of Choice, and an instance of Virtue in us. No Praise is due to them who believe only what they see. Such cannot be said to believe God, but their own Eyes; but rather *Blessed are they, saith our Saviour, who have not seen, and yet have believed.* God hath denied us the sight of these things to prove us, and try whether we dare trust his Promises and Threatnings. Our Belief therefore of this invisible World, if we would have it effectual for the amendment of our Hearts and Lives, must be so strong and powerful as to serve instead of ocular and sen-

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sensible Demonstration (whence the Apostle calls it, *Heb. 11. 1. the Evidence of things not seen*) that so the *things unseen*, which God hath revealed to us, may have the same effect upon us (not as to degree, but the same real effect) as if the other World were always visible to us.

Now our belief of any thing must necessarily be stronger or weaker, according as the Evidence is upon which it is believed; and that not only as the Evidence is in it self, but as it is perceived by us: For however evident a thing may be in it self, yet if it doth not appear so to us, our Belief of it must be very uncertain and wavering, because it is groundless. Since then the Truths or Principles of Religion, which relate to another Life, are not things to be seen or felt, we can be assured of them only by undeniable Arguments and Testimonies; about which we must use our Reasons, and our discerning and judging Faculties, before we can understand the force of them, or be really convinced by them. Not that there is any great difficulty in apprehending these Arguments; but yet there is required such attention of Mind and serious Thoughts about them, and a frequent revolving over the Proofs and Evidences of a future State,

State, with such diligence and careful examination of them, as all men ordinarily use about other matters, wherein they are greatly concerned to find out the truth.

But now is any thing more plain, than that the generality of Christians, who profess these Doctrines of Religion, are so far from being rationally, by the force of Arguments, convinced of the truth of them, that very few amongst them ever so much as set themselves to enquire into the reasons of their Belief? They owe their Faith solely to Education, Prepossession, Instruction and Example of others, take it up without any consideration of the Grounds and Reasons of it: and is it then at all wonderful that this Faith should have but very little force or power on mens Minds, which is thus received without any rational conviction of their Understandings, which is thus weakly founded and supported? Any little Blast will overthrow that House which is thus built upon the Sands.

I deny not but that a Belief thus taken upon trust, and confirmed by a long and customary Profession of it, may be so strong, and a man may be so resolved in it, that he will never stir from it. But then, I say, this is not the Faith our Saviour

requires, or which God will accept in those who are capable of a better ; and a *Mahometan*, born and bred at *Constantinople*, hath as good reason for his belief of the *Alcoran*, as such a one hath for the belief of *Christianity*. Such a Faith is only an *Obstinacy* in adhering to those things which we were first taught, whether true or false, and is common to Men in all Religions.

Our Understanding is the imperial and governing Faculty of our Souls. It is that which doth engage our Wills and Affections, and so consequently by them move and excite us to Action. When therefore our Understanding doth assent to any Truth upon clear and satisfactory Evidence, being overpowered by the force of Reason and Argument, it must needs propound it with greater strength and authority to the lower Faculties, and so must have more powerful influence upon all our Affections and Actions. Otherwise how can we expect but that any little Reason should be too hard for, and baffle that Faith, which is grounded on no Reason at all ? Or how can we think that those things which we believe, but without any sufficient convincing Motive or Evidence, should outweigh those things which we are more certain of, which we daily see, feel, and experience, such

as are the present sensible Pleasures, and the visible good and evil things of this Life? This therefore is one great Reason of the inefficacy of Mens Faith, that their belief of these great Truths was never well rooted and fixed in their Understandings.

(2.) If our Understandings are so fully convinced of these Truths, that we cannot any longer doubt of them, and yet this Belief is not effectual for our Reformation, the reason then must be only because we do not really consider them. The Understanding hath not such an absolute Power over the Will, as necessarily to determine it always to that which it judges best and fittest; but after our Understandings have yielded, our Wills may stubbornly hold out against the Siege and Batteries of the clearest Evidence, and strongest Reasons, if the Truths propounded be contrary to our fleshly Lusts and worldly Interests.

For the Will of Man is a kind of middle Faculty between the Understanding and the bodily Inclinations; and as it is moved by our Understanding to follow and obey its Dictates, so also it is most importunately solicited by our lower fleshly Appetites and Lusts, craving their several Satisfactions and Gratifications, and by outward Objects that continually thrust

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thrust themselves upon us agreeable to those Desires and Propensities. Hence ariseth a great Conflict between those Truths of Religion which are propounded by our Understandings on the one side, and our inferiour sensitive Faculties on the other. Our Lusts being checked and crossed by the Hopes and Fears of another Life, make the shrewdest Objections against the Principles of Religion, and do with all their force and power oppose the entertainment of them in our Minds; and on the success of this contest doth especially depend the efficacy of our Faith.

Thus it was with very many among the *Jews*, whilst our blessed Saviour was alive here upon Earth. They could not resist those undoubted Testimonies which he gave of his being the Son of God; but yet the Love of this World, or Fear of Sufferings had so much greater Power over their Wills, that they could never prevail with themselves to become his Disciples. *St. John 12. 42, 43. Among the chief Rulers many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the Synagogue: For they loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God.*

It is not enough therefore that these Truths of Religion have subdued our Understanding by the evidence of Reason, but they must also conquer our Will, and draw out its affections after them, before ever they can have any lasting effect upon our Lives. For the affections of the Will are the most immediate Principles of all our Actions, and therefore till our Belief hath powerfully wrought upon these Affections of Love, Desire, Hope, Fear, it can have little or no Influence upon our outward Actions.

Now the Way and Means to obtain this consent of our Wills and Affections to these Truths thus propounded by our Understandings, is often and most seriously to consider the immense greatness of the Happiness offered to us; the extremity of the Misery threatned; how vastly it concerns us what our Portion shall be in that eternal State; how unspeakably sad and unpitied our Condition will be, if we foolishly neglect providing for it; how infinitely the Glory of Heaven doth surpass all the Joys and Pleasures of this Life. These things, and the like, in a lively manner represented unto, and fixed in our Minds, will by degrees so captivate our Wills and Affections, as that we can-

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not but love and chuse this future Happiness as our greatest Good ; fear and fly from this eternal Misery as the greatest evil that can possibly betide us.

Of such infinite moment are the concerns of Eternity, that if we do but patiently attend to them, and exercise our Thoughts freely about them ; if we will not suffer our Lust to bribe and bias our Judgments, or to stifle and choak these Principles of Religion ; they will at last awaken our Consciences, and prevail above all present Temptations. And when our Faith, by the frequent and serious consideration of the mighty importance of these Matters, and of their consequence to us, hath made such a complete Conquest over our Minds and Wills, then our Actions will of themselves naturally follow. For Men will live and act agreeably to what they love, desire, hope for, or fear most,

So effectually hath our Christianity provided for the Happiness of all Men, that nothing can make us miserable, but either not believing, or not considering the great Arguments of Religion.

The different Behaviour of Men as to the Promises of our Saviour concerning another Life, I shall beg leave to illustrate by this plain Similitude.

Suppose

Suppose a Person of great Credit and Authority should now appear amongst us, and should propound to us, that if we would follow him, entirely resigning up our selves to be governed by him, he would safely conduct us all to a certain Country or Island, where we should possess all that our Hearts could wish, should be all Kings and Princes, and flow in all manner of Wealth, and enjoy an uninterrupted Health; in a word, want nothing that Men can fantasie could contribute any way to their complete satisfaction and contentment: and farther, that he should give all the security that any reasonable Man could expect or demand that this was no vain Promise or Illusion. Now some amongst us will give no heed at all to what this Man offers, nor be convinced by any Reasons or Arguments he can give them; but being either prejudiced against his Person, or disliking the Conditions, streight reject him for a Deceiver and Impostor. These are the *Atheists* and Unbelievers.

Others are indeed convinced that all this is likely to be true, they cannot see any sufficient cause to doubt of it: but yet they enjoy such conveniences, and are so taken with their present circumstances,

here, that they will not quit them for these Hopes. These are the fond Lovers of this World.

Others are willing to go to this Place, but they think it time enough yet. They would tarry and live here where they are, as long as they can; and when they can stay no longer here, then they would be glad to be waisted to this Fortunate Island. These are they that defer their Repentance till a Death-bed.

Others acknowledg that there is such a Place, where a Man may live as happily as this Person describes, but they suspect that he doth not shew the right way to it. They would find out a nearer and shorter cut to this Country. These are the Hereticks and Schismaticks.

Others are resolved to venture with him, and begin the Journey; but meeting with some difficulties and dangers in the Passage, they are soon discouraged and frightened, and return home. *These are they who receive the Word of God gladly, but when Tribulation and Persecution arise, by and by they are offended.*

Lastly, A few amongst us wholly relying upon this Person's Promises, and preferring them before all present Possessions and Enjoyments, forsake all their
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concerns and relations here, and absolutely give up themselves to his Guidance. And when in the Passage they meet with any dangers or hardships, cross Winds or Storms; tho this may make them stagger a little, and fill them with doubts and fears; yet they are resolved still to go on, and venture all upon it. These, and these only, are the true Believers.

There are many degrees of Faith, but the least degree of saving Faith is, when the Consideration of another World is become our most prevailing Interest, and is the main Principle that gives Law and Rule to all our Conversation. Let none then think to be saved by such a Faith as the very Devils in Hell have, and yet remain Devils still. They believe these great Truths of Christianity as really and as much as thou dost, who only assentest to them in thy Understanding, and confestest them with thy Mouth, but deniest and contradictest them in thy Life and Practice.

To pretend to believe this great Doctrine of another Life, which shall never end, and not to govern our selves by this Persuasion, is the most unaccountable and prodigious Folly that a reasonable Creature can be guilty of; according to that

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famous Saying of a great Man in this case, That *the strangest Monster in nature was a speculative Atheist*, one that denies the being of a God and a future State, *excepting one, and that was the practical Atheist*, who professed to believe both, but lived as if he was certain there were neither.

Nor indeed is the difference between them great. The one, *the Atheist*, winks hard, and so rushes blindfold upon eternal Ruine. The other, *the wicked Believer*, runs madly upon it with both his Eyes wide open. How inexcusable must they be at the last Day; what Plea can they offer for themselves, who obstinately refused that Happiness, which yet they acknowledged to be infinitely beyond all that this World could bless its most darling Favourites with; who wilfully precipitated themselves into those Evils and Miseries which they had a plain Foresight of?

I conclude this Head with that Answer which a Defender of *Atheistical* Principles is said once to have given to a Companion of his, who freely indulged himself in the same vitious course of Life the *Atheist* did; but yet took upon him to wonder how one that denied the Being of a God, and of a future Life, could quiet his

his Mind in such a desperate Estate. Nay rather, says the *Atheist*, it is much more strange how you can quiet your Mind, or sleep contentedly in such a vicious course of Life as I see you lead, whilst you believe such things as you say you do. And so indeed one would think that it was impossible for such a Man to live in Peace, without laying aside either his Faith or his Sins. Now the *Atheist* chuses to lay aside his Faith, that he may sin more quietly; the true *Christian* lays aside his Sins, that they may not defeat his Hopes: and which of these two acts more wisely, if we will not see in this our Day, the final Event and Issue of things will certainly convince us to our everlasting Regret and Confusion. Thus much for those who do profess to believe another Life, but do it not really and heartily.

III. All that remains is to apply myself in a few words to those who do heartily and constantly believe this great Truth of another Life after this; who not only assent to this Doctrine with their Understandings, but have made this future Happiness their ultimate choice and desire. And to them I need not say much; for this Faith alone will always

teach them what to do, without the help of an Instructor. It will e'en force them to do well, without a Guide or Monitor.

This will fortify our Minds against all the Temptations we may meet with from this World, or any of its bewitching Enjoyments. So that that Man who hath his eternal State always in his Eye, is set above the Power of the World's Frowns or Smiles. He can neither be tempted by the Sufferings of this Life, nor yet enticed by any of its alluring Charms. Can he, whose Thoughts are fixed upon Thrones and Kingdoms, and immortal Glory, be diverted by the gay Baubles, or glittering Toys which this World presents him with? It offers him infinitely too little. When the Soul once by Faith is mounted beyond the Stars into that place where God and his Saviour dwells, how mean and contemptible, how vile and sordid do all things here below appear? When this whole Earth seems but a point, how next to nothing is that small Pittance of it which any one Man can possess or enjoy? Faith looks beyond this present Scene of things; beholds this World dissolv'd, and all the Glory and Pomp of it vanishing; and this curtain being drawn, there appears to his view a new World, wherein

are Joys and Pleasures and Honours substantial and eternal; the Prospect and Fore-thought of which, rectifies his Judgment about these inferior things, and begets very slight and undervaluing Thoughts of all things on this side Heaven.

This Faith will inspire us with Strength and Activity, and carry us out even beyond our selves; will animate us with such courage and resolution, as that we shall despise all dangers and difficulties, and think eternal Happiness a good Bargain, whatever Pains or Trouble it may cost us to purchase it. Such great hopes set before us, will animate us with an undaunted Bravery and Courage, and enable us to work wonders.

This conquers the love of Life it self, which is most deeply implanted in our Natures; for what will not a Man give or part with for the saving of his Life? Yet they who have been endued with this Faith, have *not counted their Lives dear to them, so that they might finish their Course with Joy.*

I have not time now to set before you the Trophies and Victories which this Faith hath atchieved; you may find many of them recorded in the famous 11th Chapter

ter to the *Hebrews*, where the Apostle for the encouragement of all true Believers, propounds to us the brave Examples of the holy *Patriarchs* and *Prophets* of old, who through Faith subdued Kingdoms, wrought Righteousness, out of Weakness were made strong; were tortured, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection; had trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were slain with the Sword, wandred about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, afflicted, destitute and tormented. These and many more like these were the exploits of the Saints under the *Old Testament*, who had not so clear a Revelation of this eternal State, as we now have under the Gospel. But far greater yet, and more stupendous are the Triumphs of Faith in the holy Lives and patient Deaths of the blessed *Apostles*, and primitive *Martyrs* and *Confessors*, who with invincible Constancy endured Pains and Torments to Flesh and Blood insupportable, only assisted and upheld by the Grace of God, and a lively Faith in this Promise of his Son *Jesus*. They clap'd their Hands, and sang Praises in the midst of scorching Flames; they took joyfully the spoiling

spoiling of their Goods, and gave God thanks *that they were counted worthy to suffer for his Name*: and without doubt God's Grace and the same lively Faith would produce in us the very same effects, and enable us to do and to suffer the same things with the same Joy and Resolution.

But farther, this Faith by degrees moulds and transforms the Mind into a likeness to these heavenly Objects, it advances and raises our Spirits, so that they become truly great and noble, and makes us, as St. Peter tells us, *partakers of a Divine Nature*.

It filleth the Soul with constant Peace and Satisfaction, so that in all Conditions of Life, a good Man can feast himself with unseen Joys and Delights, which the worldly Man neither knows, nor can relish. This makes him content with any small Allowance of this World's Goods, and glad if by any hard shift he can rub through this World till he comes to his Kingdom.

He is but very little concerned about these seemingly grand Affairs of this Life, which so much take up and busie other Mens Thoughts and Time. He converseth most with invisible Objects, and with them finds that solid and lasting comfort,
which

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which all outward things can neither give nor take away.

He hath something to uphold and cheer his Spirit under all worldly calamities and distractions; and when he is wearied with the Impertinencies of this Life, or is not pleased with things here below, he can retire himself into the other World, and there entertain his Mind with those ravishing Joys that never cloy nor satiate.

Nay, this Faith arms a Man against the Fear of Death; it strips that *King of Terrors* of all his grim Looks; for he considers it only as God's Messenger to knock off his Fetters, to free him from this fleshly Prison, and to conduct him to that blessed Place, where he shall be more happy than he can wish or desire to be, and that for ever.

All this and much more than I can now speak, will this Faith do, where it is sincere and hearty. It will serve us instead of Sight; it will afford us a fore-taste of this immortal Happiness; it will give us present Entrance into Heaven in part, and at last a full and complete Fruition of it.

O then let it be most plainly seen by our Words, by our Works, by all we do, where-

wherever we are, what our Faith and Hope is. Let it appear to all Men that *we walk by Faith, not by Sight or Sense*. Sense is a mean, low, narrow Principle, confin'd to this present time, and this lower Earth; it can reach no higher than these outward visible things, nor can it look farther than things present. But *the just shall live by Faith*; they steer their Course and govern their Lives, not by what they see, but by what they believe and hope for, looking beyond things temporal for those things that are eternal.

Let us not be ashamed of this our Design and Aim before all Men, that whatever others think or say of us for it, we are resolved to be happy, not only for a few Days or Years, but for ever; that we will so use this World as those that must shortly leave it; that we will so improve and husband our time as remembering that it will soon be no more, but be swallowed up in Eternity: and did the stupid World know and believe what you do, they would no longer wonder at your being so much moved in a Case of such unspeakable and everlasting Consequence.

Blessed be God who hath set such mighty Hopes before us, who hath given

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us such glorious Promises, who hath made such a plain and clear Revelation of this eternal Life by *Jesus Christ*, and hath by him taught us the true way of obtaining it; who himself became to us an Example of that holy Life he prescribed to us, and after he had suffered for our Transgressions in our Nature, entred into the highest Heavens to prepare Mansions of Glory for all the faithful Followers of him. To whom therefore with the *Father* and *Holy Ghost*, one eternal God, be ascribed by us and all Men, all Praise, Thanksgiving and Obedience for evermore. *Amen.*

T H E E N D.

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the F U N E R A L

Of the Reverend

Benjamin Calamy, D. D.

And late Minister of

St. Lawrence Jewry, London,

Jan. 7th, 1686.

B Y

WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D.D.

Dean of St. Paul's, Master of the Temple,
and Chaplain in ordinary to his
Majesty.

SERMON

Preached at the Church of St. Paul, London,

On the 14th of May, 1788.

By the Rev. John D. D.

Author of the

Practical Sermons, &c.

London, 1788.

Printed by J. D. D.

Printed at the Church of St. Paul, London, by the Rev. John D. D.

*To his much Esteemed Friends
the Church Wardens and
Parishioners of St. LAU-
RENCE JEWRY, and St.
MARY MAGDALENE
Milkstreet.*

Gentlemen,

THOUGH I had no intention to
make this Sermon Publick,
yet I could not with any
Modesty deny your Request, when
you had paid so great a regard to
the Counsel given you in it. I
heartily Congratulate your happy
agreement in the Choice of so excel-
lent a Person to succeed the not-to-
be-forgotten Dr. CALAMY, who
I doubt not will deserve all that
Honour and Kindness, which it is
so natural to you to show to your
Ministers. I here present you with

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the Sermon, as it was Preached, excepting some few things at the beginning, which were left out in speaking to shorten it, as much as I could, without injuring the Sense. I am sensible the Character falls very short of what our deceased Friend deserved, but it is every Word true, and I thought had been as inoffensive too as it is true; and so I believe it will appear to wise and considering men, and others may judge as they please. If it will contribute any thing to make both Ministers and People more faithful in the discharge of their several Duties, I have what I aimed at, both in Preaching and Printing it, especially if you please to accept of it as a Testimony of the sincere Respects of

GENTLEMEN,

Your very Humble Servant,

WILL. SHERLOCK.

Matth. xxiv. 45, 46.

*Who then is a Faithful and Wise servant,
whom his Lord hath made Ruler over
his Household, to give them meat in
due season?*

*Blessed is that servant whom his Lord
when he cometh, shall find so do-
ing.*

IN this and the foregoing Chapter, our Saviour acquaints his Disciples with the Signs and Prognosticks of his coming; which plainly have a double aspect, both upon his coming to destroy *Jerusalem*, and upon his coming to judge the World: But the application he makes of it, is of universal use; *Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* v. 42. which is excellent advice, in what sense soever we understand the coming of our Lord; for the coming of our Lord signifies his coming to take account of us, and whether we apply this to the hour of our Death, or to the last Day of Judgment, still it concerns us to watch; that is, to be always diligent and careful in

doing our Duty, and discharging that Trust which is committed to us, that whenever our Lord comes, we may give up our Accounts with joy.

The Words I have now read to you, concern the Apostles of Christ, and their Successors, the Bishops and Pastors of the Church, who are as much obliged to this watchfulness, as any other sort of persons, because as they have a greater Trust, so they have a greater Account to give. This we learn from *Luke 12. 42, 43 v.* where our Saviour having given that general advice to all his Disciples, to watch for the coming of their Lord, St. Peter particularly enquires, how far he, and the rest of the Apostles were concerned in it: *Lord, speakest thou this Parable unto us, or even to all? v. 41.* To which our Saviour answers, *Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his Lord shall make Ruler of his Household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* Wherein our Saviour does particularly apply that general advice to his Apostles and their Successors, his Servants, Stewards, and Ministers of the Gospel: and indeed those particular expressions which are here used do sufficiently

ly acquaint us, to whom this Advice belongs.

We need not question, who is here meant by *the Lord*, which is the peculiar Title of Christ in the *New Testament*; and it is as evident, what this Household is, which is the Church of Christ, *The House and Temple of the living God*, 1 Cor. 3. 16. *The Household of Faith*, 2 Cor. 6. 16. *The Household of God*, Gal. 6. 10. And Christ is said to be Faithful *as a Son*, or Lord, *over his own House*, whose House are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end, Heb. 3. 5, 6. in distinction from *Moses*, who was Faithful as a Servant.

The Rulers of the Household, or the Stewards in St. *Luke*, are the Apostles, Bishops, Presbyters, who are the Governours of the Church, *ἐπισκοποι*, the Overseers, Acts 20. 28. *The Ministers of Christ*, the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4. 1. *The Meat*, which they are to give in season, is the Word of Life, which with respect to the different degrees and perfection of Knowledg is compared to *Milk*, 1 Cor. 3. 2. and to *strong Meat*, Heb. 5. 12. 1 Pet. 2. 2. and therefore they are commanded to feed the Flock, to preach the Word, to be instant in season,

season, out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. 2 Tim. 4. 2.

This is sufficient to shew you, that my Text does principally concern the Bishops and Ministers of the Church, who are in an eminent manner the Servants of Christ in the Instruction and Government of his Church, which is his House. And in speaking to these words, I shall observe this following method.

I. Consider the Duty of Gospel-Bishops and Pastors, which is to feed, and to govern the Household of Christ.

II. The Qualifications of Gospel-Ministers, which are Faithfulness and Prudence, *a Faithful and Wise Servant.*

III. The great rewards of such men: *'Blessed is that Servant.*

I. The Duty of Gospel-Ministers, whether Bishops or others, and that consists of two parts: 1. To Feed. 2. To Govern the Household or Church of Christ. They are appointed *Rulers of his Household, to give them meat in due season.*

1. To Feed the Flock of Christ: *Acts 20. 28.* This Command Christ gave to Peter, and repeated it three times; Simon,

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son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? then feed my Lambs, feed my Sheep: John 21. 15, 16, 17. Now to feed, signifies to instruct men in the Knowledge of Christ; for Knowledge is the proper food and nourishment of the Soul, by which it grows in spiritual Wisdom, and all Virtue and Goodness; 1 Pet. 2. 2. and is as necessary to our spiritual Life, as natural food is to the Life of our Bodies. This is Life eternal, saith our Saviour, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent: John 17. 3.

For this reason our Saviour appointed Stewards and Dispensers of the Mysteries of his Kingdom, whose whole business it should be to study the Divine Will themselves, and to instruct others. For this is a Knowledge which must be taught. Nature may instruct us in the Being of a God, and the differences between Good and Evil, and the plain rules of Morality; but the Mysteries of the Kingdom, the whole Oeconomy of Man's Salvation by Jesus Christ, is to be known only by Revelation. Christ came down from Heaven to reveal this to us, and he instructed his Apostles, and his Apostles by their Preaching and Writings instructed the Church, and have left us a standing Rule of Faith

and Manners; but yet it is necessary there should be some peculiarly devoted to the Service of Religion, the study of the Scriptures, and the work of the Ministry, to instruct and teach those who have neither leisure nor opportunities for enquiry, nor capacity to learn without a Guide, which is the case of the generality of Christians; especially since Religion has been clog'd with such infinite Disputes, and there has been so much art used to make the plainest Truths difficult, obscure, and uncertain, to corrupt the Christian Faith, and to make it comply with mens sensual Lusts, or secular Interests. A Guide and Instructor is absolutely necessary, when there are so many Turnings and Labyrinths, wherein men may lose themselves, and their way to Heaven.

But tho there were no Disputes in Religion, no difficulty in understanding it, tho all men were agreed about the way to Heaven, tho the meanest Christian understood the Mysteries of Christianity, as well as the greatest Divine, yet there would be constant need of a spiritual Guide, while men are apt to be unmindful of their Duty, and careless in the practice of it. The work of an Evangelical Pastor is not meerly to instruct the Ignorant, but to exhort,

to reprove, to admonish, to watch over the Lives and Manners of Christians, to make seasonable Applications to their Consciences, to administer Comfort to afflicted Spirits, to excite and quicken the slothful, and to encourage the fearful and timorous, and to assist and direct men in their spiritual Warfare, how to obtain a glorious Victory over the World and the Flesh. This is to feed the Flock of Christ, and to give them Meat in due season, to instruct them in those things of which they are ignorant, and to put them in mind of those things which they already know, that their Faith may be turned into a principle of Life and Action, and this heavenly Food may be digested into Blood and Spirits, to the edifying of the Body of Christ in all Christian Graces and Virtues.

2. Another part of the Ministerial Office consists in Acts of Discipline and Government: Christ has made these Ministers and Servants, *Rulers over his Household*. No Society can be preserved without Order and Government, which is as absolutely necessary in the Church, as in the State: Christ is the *Head* of the Church, *Eph. 5. 23.* the *Husband*, the *Shepherd*, *John 10. 14.* the *Lord*, which are all names of Authority and Power; and the Church

is his *Body*, his *Spouse*, his *Flock*, his *Household*, and *Family*, which are names of Subjection, and denote a regular and orderly Society: but Christ has now left this World, and does not visibly appear among us, to direct and govern the Affairs of his Church: he is ascended into Heaven, where he sits at the right hand of God, and exerciseth an invisible Power and Providence for the defence and preservation of his Church on Earth: He governs us by his Laws, and by his Spirit, and by his Ministers: for when he ascended on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave gifts to Men: And he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers: for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledg of the Son of God, to a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Eph. 4. 8, 11, 12, 13.

When our Saviour was risen from the dead, he tells his Disciples, *All power is given unto me both in Heaven and in Earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching*

ing them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World. Mat. 28. 18, 19, 20. This is their Commission to preach the Gospel, and to govern his Church; which was not meerly a personal Commission to the Apostles, but extends to all their Successors, as appears from Christ's promise to be with them in the discharge of this Ministerial Authority to the end of the World. Thus St. John acquaints us, that Christ after his Resurrection appeared to his Apostles, when they were met together, and said unto them, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, so send I you. And as he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. John 20. 21, 22, 23. This invested them with Authority, but then the actual communication of Power, which especially at that time was necessary to the discharge of their Office, was reserved for the descent of the Holy Ghost; and therefore our Saviour commanded them, Not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, that is, the gift of the Holy Ghost. For, says he,
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Ye shall receive Power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the Earth: Acts 1. 4, 8, 9.

And accordingly we find, that during the time of the Apostles, the supreme Authority of the Church was in their hands, which they committed to their Successors, and has ever since been exercised by Christian Bishops and Presbyters, with regard to their different Order and Power. But what is this Power which Christ hath given to his Ministers? They have no Rods, nor Axes, as secular Princes have, to compel men to the Faith of Christ, and to force their obedience. No, this is contrary to the Genius and Spirit of Christianity. If men will be Infidels, if they will be wicked, we cannot help it: *For tho we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, such as earthly Princes use, but mighty thro God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it self against the knowledg of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4, 5.*

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Our Saviour in my Text acquaints us what this Power and Authority is; he *makes them Rulers over his Household, to give them meat in due season.* This is the Authority Christ hath given to his Ministers, to instruct, to exhort, to advise, to admonish, to reprove, and that with *sharpness* too, when there is occasion for it, *according to the power which the Lord hath given to edification, and not to destruction*; as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. 13. 10.

But what Authority is this? May not every Christian do the same? Is it not the duty of us all, as we are able, to instruct, exhort, reprove one another? Yes, it is; and I would to God it were more generally practised: but yet every private Christian cannot do this with the Authority of a Bishop, or a Gospel-Minister. The Instructions and Exhortations of private Christians, are acts of Friendship and Charity; and the obligation to it, is that mutual concernment and sympathy which the Members of the same Body ought to have for each other. In Gospel-Ministers it is an act of Authority, like the Censures of a Father, a Magistrate, or a Judge.

We do not pretend indeed, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. 1. 24. to *have dominion over your Faith*, to exercise a kind of Sovereign Authority, to oblige you to believe any thing meerly because we say it ; but yet our Authority is such, that if in the exercise of our Office we explain the Articles of Faith and Rules of Life to you, it lays an indispenfible obligation upon you carefully to examine what we say, and not to reject it, without plain and manifest evidence, that what we teach you is not agreeable to the Will of God revealed in the Scriptures. For when we come in the Name and Authority of Christ, that man who rejects our Message, without being sure that we exceed our Commission, rejects the Authority by which we act ; and *he that despiseth, despiseth not Man, but God.* It is our Work, and our Commission to instruct you, and it is your Duty to be instructed ; and whoever shall wantonly reject any Doctrines which do not fute with his humour and interest, or oppose some popular mistakes and prejudices against the Instructions of his Guide, or turn away his ear from Instruction, and heap to himself Teachers having itching ears, such a man must give a severe account of this neglect and contempt to the
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great Bishop and Shepherd of Souls. While we are careful to discharge our Office in pursuance of that Trust our great Master hath committed to us, what our Saviour tells his Apostles is true of the meanest of us all: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* Luke 10. 16.

The like may be said of the Exhortations, and Counsels, and Directions, and Reproofs of our Spiritual Guides, they carry great Authority with them; they are not like the private Admonitions of our Friends, who exhort and reprove out of kindness, and their particular concernment for us: To reject such Counsels as these, does mightily aggravate our sin and our condemnation, as every thing does which makes our sin more wilful and obstinate; but to reject the Counsels and Reproofs of our Guide, is a new act of disobedience to that Authority which Christ has set in his Church. Whether you will hear, or whether you will obey, we must exhort, reprove, advise; and woe be to us, if we do not; and woe be to those who will not hear, who will not obey. Our great Master looks upon this as a contempt of his own Authority, and this is all the
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Authority we have. We cannot force you to obey our Counsels or Reproofs, but ours and your Master will severely punish you, if you do not.

In a word, the Instructions, Reproofs, and Censures of Christ's Ministers, carry such Authority with them, that they can receive into, or shut out of the Communion of the Church, which is the only visible state of Salvation. Remission of sins, and eternal Life, is ordinarily to be had only in the visible Communion of the Church; and therefore the Power of receiving into the Church by Baptism, and of casting out of the Church by Excommunication, which is the only Authority Christ hath given to these Rulers of his Household, to receive in and cast out of his Family, is called a Power of remitting or retaining Sins, because the forgiveness of Sins is to be had only in the Communion of the Church, and no man belongs to the invisible Church, who does not live in Communion with the visible Church, when it may be had.

The Authority of Christ's Ministers is to feed those who are of his Household, to give them their meat in due season, and to judg who shall belong to this Household, who shall be received in, or cast out of
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Christ's Family : This is the highest Act of Church Authority on Earth, and the only Sanction of all our Instructions, Counsels, and Reproofs ; and therefore this Authority is not intrusted with every Gospel-Minister, but is committed to the chief Governours of the Church, the Bishops who succeed into the ordinary Apostolical Power.

II. Let us now consider the due Qualifications which are required in Gospel-Ministers, and they are two, Faithfulness and Prudence : *Who is that faithful and wise Servant ?*

First, Faithfulness : Now Faithfulness in a Servant consists in being true to his Trust ; and when this is applied to preaching the Gospel, it signifies, that he is extremely careful to publish the whole Mind and Will of God ; which, as it concerns us in this Age, includes these following Rules :

1. To be careful to acquaint our selves with the Will of God, that we may be *Scribes which are instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven, who are like unto a man that is a Householder, which bringeth forth out of his Treasure things new and old.* Mat. 13. 52. The Priests lips must preserve Knowledge,

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but we must first have it, before we can teach it others ; and since none of us now pretend to immediate Inspirations, this is a work of difficulty and labour, and requires as much faithfulness in our Studies, as in the Pulpit. It is no argument of Faithfulness, whatever it may be of Diligence, to run like *Achimaz* without Tidings, 2 *Sam.* 18. 22. to vent some crude and indigested thoughts for the Oracles of God.

2. Faithfulness requires us to preach nothing for the Will of God, but what we are sure to be so ; to deliver no Message, but what we have received in Commission ; not to indulge our own private conjectures and fancies, nor think to mend and sublimiate Religion by Philosophical Speculations, but to content our selves with the simplicity of the Gospel, to preach Christ Jesus, and him crucified. Nothing has done greater mischief to Religion, than when the very Teachers of it have been ambitious to be wise above what is written. All the Articles of the Christian Faith, as distinguish'd from the Principles of natural Religion, can be known only by Revelation ; and therefore there is no reasoning about them any further than to know what is revealed ; and what is not

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revealed, is so uncertain, and so useless, that it is not worth the knowing. Since we preach in the Name, and by the Authority of Christ, we ought not to instruct our People in any thing but what we have his Authority for; for this is to exceed our Commission. Other nice Speculations may entertain us in private Conversation; but when we preach in the Name of Christ, let us only preach his Gospel, and teach them to observe and do whatsoever he hath commanded us.

3. Faithfulness requires, that we preach the whole Will of God; that we instruct men in all the Articles of the Christian Faith, especially where there is any apparent and present danger of a mistake; and that we teach them every part of their Duty to God and Men, especially such Duties as they are most unwilling to learn, and most averse to practise. This is an essential part of Faithfulness, and requires no small courage too.

There are no times so bad, no hearers so captious, but they will very well bear some general commendations of Religion, or some common Topicks about Virtue or Vice; which are of great use too, especially in such a sceptical and unbelieving Age as this. But a faithful discharge of

our Ministry requires somewhat more ; a particular application to the Consciences of men, according to their wants and necessities, not so much to consult what will please them, as what will do them good. It mightily concerns a Gospel-Minister, as far as he can, to maintain a fair reputation in the World ; but a good Name is nothing worth, when we can do no good by it, when we cannot get or maintain a good Name without neglecting our Duty, or betraying the Souls of Men. I had a thousand times rather, that men should reproach and revile me for instructing them in such Duties as they cannot with patience hear of, than that they should commend me for my silence.

It is hard to live in any Age, wherein there are not some popular Errors, or some popular Vices to be corrected ; and it is a very dangerous thing to meddle with any thing that is popular. But what is danger to that man, who is in a greater danger by the neglect of his Duty ? Shall any man call himself a Minister of the Gospel, and a Servant of Jesus Christ, and in such an Age as we now live in, be ashamed or afraid to censure or confute the Errors of Popery or Fanaticism, or to reprove Schism and Faction, because they are very popular

popular Vices? Let a man so account of us, as the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in Stewards that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: as St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. 4. 1, 2, 3. When we leave our several Flocks, it will be infinite satisfaction to us, to be able to say, as St. Paul did to the Asian Bishops: I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you all the counsel of God. Acts 20. 26, 27.

Secondly, Prudence is as necessary in a Gospel-Minister, as Faithfulness is: By Prudence I do not mean Cunning and Subtily, artificial Insinuations and Addresses, which are more like the Arts of Seducers, than of Gospel-Ministers; Who by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, Rom. 16. 18. Prudence will not allow us in the neglect of any part of our Duty, whatever the event be; but we must renounce the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending our selves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Cor. 4. 2.

Wisdom and Prudence, as it is consistent with Faithfulness and Honesty in the discharge of our Trust, can signify no more but this; To instruct, exhort, persuade, and perform all the parts and offices of a Gospel-Minister, in such a manner, as may render our instructions and persuasions most effectual; to take the most convenient seasons, when men are most apt to be wrought on; to teach them such things as are of most present use to them; to use such Arguments as are most likely to prevail; to avoid all unnecessary provocations, when the Duty it self, which we are to teach them is not the matter of the provocation: for if men will be provoked with hearing of their Duty, there is no help for that. Prudence never dispenses with any part of our Duty, but directs to the best way of doing it: a faithful Servant does what he is commanded, and a wise Servant does it in the most effectual manner.

III. The last part of my Text concerns the great Rewards of such Faithful and Wise Servants; *Blessed is that Servant.* What this Reward is, we are not here particularly told. All good men, we know,

know, shall be very blessed and happy in the other World; and we may reasonably presume, that Christ, who is the great Judg of the World, has reserved some peculiar marks of honour for his immediate Servants: This he plainly intimates to us, in that distinction he makes between the reward of a Prophet, and of a righteous man: *He that receiveth a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a Righteous Man in the name of a Righteous Man, shall receive a Righteous Man's reward.* Mat. 10. 41.

Our reward in Heaven will bear some proportion to the nature of our Work, and to that Service we do for God in this World. Now we cannot do any more acceptable Service than to serve God in the Gospel of his Son; to use our utmost endeavors to propagate Religion in the World, and to make other men wise, and good, and happy. Our Saviour himself came into the World on this very design, and was advanc'd to the right hand of Glory and Power, as a reward of it; and those who are workers together with him, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. 6. 1. will receive some proportionable Reward also.

The faithful discharge of this Duty is a work of infinite care and difficulty, that

it made an Apostle himself cry out, *Who is sufficient for these things?* 2 Cor. 2. 16. It requires the exercise of great care, and great prudence, and great patience; it is abundantly enough to employ our whole time and thoughts either in studying the Will of God, or in attending the publick Ministries of Religion, or in private Addresses and Applications to men who want our Advice and Counsel: we must contentedly bear all the Affronts and Insolencies of bad men, the Frowardness and Peevishness of many profest Christians, the gain-sayings and contradictions of sinners. We must go on and persevere in our Work, tho our Persons and our Ministry be despised: *when we are reviled, we must bless; when persecuted, we must suffer; when defamed, we must entreat; yea tho we are made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things.* 1 Cor. 4. 12, 13. This is not very pleasing to flesh and blood, but the harder the work is, the greater will our reward be, if we be found faithful and wise Servants.

Nay, there is no Work does so ennoble the Mind as this, and qualify us for an excellent Reward. No man can faithfully discharge this Work, but it must purge and refine his Mind, and set him vastly above
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this World, and the little concernments of it ; It gives us a more clear distinct comprehensive knowledg of God and divine things, which is an Angelical perfection of the Mind and Understanding ; and he must be a strange man, who can be so constantly employed in the contemplation of God, and the things which relate to another and a better Life, and not find his Soul raviſht with thoſe unſeen and unſpeakable Glories ; who is ſo constantly employed in taking care of other mens Souls, and takes no care of his own ; who is ſo frequent in his Devotions, as the very nature of our Work exacts from us, and not live a moſt divine and heavenly life. There are indeed ſome, who in the moſt divine Employment are no great Examples of ſuch a Divine Converſation ; but I fear they will not be found in the number of theſe faithful and wiſe Servants. Whoever heartily applies himſelf to the care of Souls, will in the firſt place take care of his own ; and the faithful diſcharge of this Duty, will raiſe us ſo much above the ordinary Level and Attainments of Chriſtians, as will prepare us for a greater Reward, and advance us to a more perfect ſtate of Glory.

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in to Christ, who is the Sovereign Lord and Judge of the World, if we approve our selves faithful and wise Servants, will secure us of a more excellent Reward. The Church on Earth and the Church in Heaven, is but one Church, one Household and Family ; and those whom he has made Rulers of his Household here, to whom he has committed the greatest places of Trust and Dignity, need not fear being degraded in the other World, if they adorn their Office, and faithfully discharge their Trust here : And therefore our Saviour tells his Apostles, *Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the Throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel : Mat. 19. 28.* that is, that their Reward and Glory in the other World, should answer to that place of Trust and Power, and Dignity, which they had in the Church on Earth ; and this Promise is no more peculiar to the Apostles, than their Office was.

In a word, if we consider what the state of the other World is, and who is King there, that it is the blessed Jesus, our Great High Priest, King of Salem, or the new Jerusalem, and Priest of the most High

High God, how mean and contemptible soever our Office is thought here, we need not doubt but the Scene will be mightily chang'd, when we come into that Kingdom where the King is a High Priest.

Let this then, beloved Brethren of the Clergy, be a mighty Encouragement to us to be very diligent and faithful in the discharge of this great Trust; whatever Difficulties we meet with, whatever Scorns, Reproaches, or Sufferings, it is but expecting a while, and our Lord will come, and his Reward is with him: and *blest*, for ever *blest*, is that *Servant*, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

Yea *blest*, for ever *blest*, as my Text gives us reason to hope, is this our dear Brother, whose Remains lie here before us, who, when his Lord came, was found thus doing. We may lament the loss of so kind a Relation, so true a Friend, so faithful a Pastor, and Fellow-labourer, according to the several interests we had in him; but he, *blest* Soul, has fought a good Fight, and finished his Course and kept the Faith, and is now gone to receive a Crown of Righteousness, a Crown of Immortality and Glory. He is now gone to that great
Bishop

Bishop and Shepherd of Souls, whose Flock he has so carefully and diligently fed, and whose wandring and stragling Sheep he has reduced into the Fold: To that kind Shepherd who laid down his life for his Sheep, and therefore will not fail to reward those who have spent their lives, and were ready to have sacrificed them too, for the service of Souls.

When we speak of so great a Man, it is below his Character to mention such things as would be thought considerable Attainments in meaner Persons; tho indeed a truly great Man does nothing meanly. A great Mind gives a peculiar grace and decency to common Actions, as it was easie to observe in his very Mirth and freest Humours, that he never gave the Reins out of his hands, but governed himself by the strictest Rules of Prudence and Religion.

But I shall confine my self to the subject of my Text, and consider him only as a *faithful and wise Steward*, and therefore have very little to add; for I doubt not, but you who knew him, especially you who have enjoyed the benefit of his Ministry, and have lived under his Care and Conduct, have already applied what I have discoursed on this Argument, to
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your deceased Pastor ; and would I have chosen any particular man to have drawn the Character by, of a wise and faithful Steward, there are not many men I should sooner have thought on than Dr. *Calamy* to have been the Pattern.

That he did take care to give you Meat in due season, I need not tell you, because you all know it. If preaching in season and out of season ; if publick Instructions and private Applications, where they were needful or desired, be to feed the Flock of Christ, and to give Meat to his Household and Family, this he did, and that very faithfully and wisely too.

In the first place, he took care to inform himself, and to furnish his own Mind with all useful knowledg ; and his constant Preaching, tho without any vain affectation of Learning, which serves only to amuse, not to instruct, did sufficiently discover both his natural and acquired Abilities. He had a clear and distinct apprehension of things, an easie and manly Rhetorick, strong Sense conveyed to the mind in familiar Words, good Reasons inspired with a decent Passion, which did not only teach, but move and transport the Hearers, and at the same time gave both light and heat : for indeed
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he was a good man, which is necessary to make a good Preacher; he had an inward vital sense of Religion, and that animated his Discourses with the same Divine Passions which he felt in himself.

He did not entertain his Hearers with School-Subtilties, or a conjectural Divinity, with such thin and airy Speculations, as can neither be seen, nor felt, nor understood, but his chief care was to explain the great Articles of Faith, and Rules of Life, what we must believe, and how we must live, that we may be eternally happy. And he did, as a faithful Servant ought to do, as he declared a little before his death, that he never preached any thing, but what he himself firmly believed to be true.

I need not tell you what a troublesome World we have lived in for some years past, such critical times as would try the Principles and Spirits of men; when a prevailing Faction threatned both Church and State, and the fears of Popery were thought a sufficient Justification of the most illegal and irreligious methods to keep it out; when it was scandalous to speak a word either for the King or the Church; when cunning men were silent, and those who affected Popularity swam with

with the Stream : then this great and good Man durst reprove Schism and Faction, durst teach men to conform to the Church, and to obey and honour the King ; durst vindicate the despised Church of *England*, and the hated Doctrine of Passive Obedience, tho the one was thought to favour Popery, and the other to introduce Slavery : but he was above the powerful Charms of Names, and liked Truth never the worse, because it was miscalled. His publick Sermons preached in those days, and printed by publick Authority, are lasting Proofs of this, and yet he was no Papist neither, but durst reprove the errors of Popery , when some others, who made the greatest noise and out-cry about it, grew wise and cautious. This was like a truly honest and faithful Servant, to oppose the growing Distempers of the Age, without any regard either to unjust Censures, or apparent Danger. And yet he did not needlessly provoke any man ; he gave no hard words , but thought it severe enough to confute mens Errors without upbraiding or reproaching their Persons. His Conversation was courteous and affable to all men, soft and easie, as his Principles were stubborn ; he could yield any thing but the Truth,
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and bear with any thing but the Vices of men. He would indeed have been the Wonder of his Age, had he not lived in such an Age, as, thanks be to God, can shew many such Wonders: and yet in such an Age as this he made an illustrious Figure; tho he had his Equals, he had not many Superiours.

Thus he lived, and thus this good Man died, for thus he was found doing when his Lord came. The first symptoms of his Distemper seized him just before his last Sermon at *White-hall*, but gave him so much respite as to take his leave of the World in an excellent Discourse of Immortality, which he speaks of with such a sensible gust and relish, as if his Soul had been then upon the wing, and had some foretast of those joys it was just a going to possess. And indeed he encountered the apprehensions of Death, like one who believed and hoped for Immortality; he was neither over-fond of living, nor afraid to die. He received the Supper of our Lord, professed his Communion with the Church of *England*, in which he had lived, and in which he now died; and having recommended his Soul to God, he quietly expected how he would dispose of him.

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But I must not forget to tell you, that he died like a true and faithful Pastor, with a tender care and affection for his Flock. When he imposed this unwelcome Office upon me, he told me, he did not desire any Praises of himself, but that I would give some good advice to his People, who, said he, are indeed a very kind and loving People. And this was not the first nor the only time I have heard him own not only your kind reception of him at first, but the repeated and renewed expressions of your Affection, which did signally manifest it self in his late Sickness, and now accompanies him to the Grave. A Character, which to your honour I speak it, you have now made good for several successions, and which, I hope, you will never forfeit.

But what that good counsel is, he would have me give you, he told me not; and therefore I can only guess at his intentions in this. Were he now present to speak to you, I believe he could not give you better counsel than he has already done: and therefore my advice to you is,

I. To remember those Counsels and Exhortations, which you have heard from your deceased Pastor. Tho the Sower be removed, yet let that immortal Seed,

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that word of Life which he has sown, live and fructify in your hearts, and bring forth the blessed Fruits of Righteousness. He has shewed you the plain way to Heaven, have a care you do not forget it, have a care you do not wander out of it. He has recommended the Communion of the Church of *England* to you. He has taught you to be loyal to your Prince, and to be true to your Religion: take care then, that neither your Religion destroy your Loyalty, nor your Loyalty corrupt your Religion: remember that beloved Person, whose Memory is dear and sacred to you, was neither a Rebel, a Papist, nor a Fanatick.

2. Since you have lost your Guide, a faithful and prudent Guide, and the choice of a Successor is in your selves, be very careful, as the concernment of your Souls requires you should be, of your Choice. Consider what an Age we live in, which requires an experienced and skilful Pilot to steer a secure and steddly course. Have a care of dividing into Factions and Parties; let not mere private Interests or Friendships govern you; if it be possible, admit of no Competitions, much less of Pulpit-Combats, which do oftner occasion lasting and fatal Divisions, than end
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in a wise choice. Remember what a succession you have had of great and good men in this Place, and let it be your ambition still to equal and out-do it, if you can.

And now I shall conclude with one word to you my Brethren of the Clergy. We have lost a faithful and diligent Labourer in God's Vineyard, in a time when we could ill have spared him; let us then, who still survive, double our diligence, and express a greater Zeal and Concernment in the defence of Religion, and in the care of Souls. Let us remember that we are all mortal, and how little time we have to work in, we know not; but let us so improve the remainder of our days, that when our Lord comes, he may own us for faithful and wise Servants, and bestow on us a Crown of Righteousness and Immortality. Which God of his infinite mercy grant, through our Lord Jesus Christ; To whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be Honour, and Glory, and Power, now and for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.